

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 07

Stillwater City

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller... than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: Mid-Journey

A boat was soaring through the clouds and the mist, heading straight towards Stillwater City. Ji Ning lay there within the boat, leaning against the stern of the boat. From this position, he could stare down at the boundless land beneath him.

“Uncle. Father. Mother. They must be avenged.” Ning pondered to himself. The scroll his father had left him had the name of his enemy. There had been a total of three malefactors; the primary one was named ‘Dong Seven’. This was an extremely strange name, but this Dong Seven’s grandfather was a Primal Daoist.

Ning knew his own power quite well. To be able to kill Adept Xu Li truly didn’t mean anything. After all, there were exceptionally powerful, talented Wanxiang Adepts such as that Xue Hongyi, who Ning didn’t feel confident in being able to defeat. As for those lofty, exalted Primal Daoists...most likely, a single breath of primal flame from them could incinerate Ning and shatter his soul.

Primal fire...this was a sort of ability someone only had upon becoming a Primal Daoist. No one who was not a Primal Daoist was capable of it, much like how the ‘Myriad Manifestations’ could only be unleashed by someone who was at least at the Wanxiang Adept level.

“A total of three culprits, with Dong Seven being the primary one. As for the other two, ‘Yu Dong’ and ‘Shui Yi’, they were accomplices.” Ning pondered to himself. According to what his father had told him, Yu Dong and Shui Yi were like manservants who followed behind Dong Seven. Upon Seven giving the order, they would immediately attack and kill.

Strictly speaking, the killers were actually Yu Dong and Shui Yi, with Dong Seven having given the order.

“Dong Seven! Yu Dong! Shui Yi! All three of you deserve death.” A savage light flashed past Ning’s eyes, and then he considered what to do. “For now, I can’t be in a rush to get revenge. My foundations are still quite shallow; I don’t even know exactly how strong Dong Seven and the other

two currently are, nor where they are located. There's no way I can take revenge."

"It's best if I first go to Stillwater City. I should find a school and enter it." Ning mused to himself. Ning was no fool. His parents had previously told him as well that after he went out into the world, he should find a major power to take shelter under. After all, it was extremely dangerous for a single, solitary person to go wandering the world by himself. If he had someone to rely on, then things would naturally be different. For ordinary Zifu Disciples, it was quite hard for them to be accepted into a school, but unrivaled geniuses like Ning could easily join with a major power.

Since he obviously was capable of joining a major power, Ning naturally wouldn't make things difficult for himself and act rashly by himself.

"Upon entering a school...I will be able to learn divine abilities within the school, and even learn some supreme Ki Refining techniques." Ning mused to himself. Even someone like Jadechild had been able to learn the 'Heavenly Transformation' technique at Snowdragon Mountain. As long as Ning chose a school that was even more powerful than Snowdragon Mountain, he felt certain that the school should definitely have a divine ability within.

"By borrowing from a school's strength...my own power shall rise greatly, and my horizons shall be expanded. Only then will I be qualified to take revenge." Ning didn't wish to lose his life for the sake of revenge.

It was just as his parents had said; taking revenge was one matter, but his life was more important. He was going to ensure that his name was known throughout the vast world, and that one day, he was going to meet again with the Lord of Cui Palace.

"Unfortunately, I am not strong enough. Otherwise, I could simply directly enter the Raindragon Guard." Ning shook his head. It was too difficult for one to join the Raindragon Guard. Even Adept Mu Xiao had entered as a late-stage Wanxiang Adept. If Ning were to enter, even if he truly were to pass, upon others discovering that Ning was only at the

seventh stage of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] and yet capable of unleashing such great power thanks to the [Starseizing Hand], they would certainly realize that something was amiss.

His divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], was his true trump card. Ning wasn't willing to rely on this technique to enter the Raindragon Guard.

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"First find a school and borrow from their strength to increase my own. Afterwards, I'll join the Raindragon Guard. The Raindragon Guard's divine abilities and techniques should be all-encompassing, and most likely even more powerful than those available to the Marquisate of Stillwater." Ning nodded. If one was to stand at the peak, it would be sheer stupidity to foolishly struggle randomly. Without a powerful Ki Refining technique, he wouldn't be able to break through to the Wanxiang level, much less the Primal Daoist level.

The more precious a Ki Refining technique was, the less willing a school would be to allow outsiders to gain access to it. Anyone who disseminated a precious Ki Refining technique would be hunted and killed by the school!

Given that his talent was unparalleled...first entering a school, and then entering the Raindragon Guard was the proper course of action.

The path of cultivation was one where, as the saying went, every third person in a line could become one's teacher. The spirit of the underwater estate had also advised Ning to take on many different teachers and masters, to absorb the best from them, and thus more easily become one of the great powers of the Three Realms in the future.

"Uncle White." Ning spoke out. The Whitewater Hound atop the boat turned to look towards Ning. "Tell me. On this trip to Stillwater City, should I first find a master and then pay a visit to Northmont Baiwei? Or should I go see Northmont Baiwei first?" Ning said. "This man has treated me quite well, and he asked me to go meet him if I were to go to Stillwater City."

"Northmont Baiwei?" The Whitewater Hound spoke in the human

tongue. “This person has an extraordinary background, and likes to make friends. Since he asked you to do so, go and see him. This Northmont Baiwei must be quite familiar with Stillwater City and the various schools within. This will be of assistance to you in choosing a school to join.”

Ning nodded lightly. This made sense. After all, the only major sect within the Stillwater Commandery area which Ning was familiar with was Snowdragon Mountain. He didn’t know much about the others. However, within the borders of the Stillwater Commandery, Snowdragon Mountain couldn’t be considered one of the top schools. Only a school that had an Immortal guarding it could be considered a top school.

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The flying boat Ning was aboard didn’t fly too quickly. Each time, it would spend roughly seventeen or eighteen hours flying, with the other six or seven hours on the ground, where Ning would search for a place to train, rest, visualize the [Nuwa Painting], and other things. Travelling at this rate, he was able to advance nearly a hundred thousand kilometers each day.

The sixth day after Ning had left Swallow Mountain. He was aboard his flying boat, moving through the clouds. “Eh?” Ning suddenly sensed a powerful ripple. He couldn’t help but turn his head to look, only to see in the distance, a tall ship was pressing down at high speed, generating waves of air in its wake.

Aboard the large ship, there were many beautiful, flower-like women. On the second deck of the large ship, there sat a young noble with white skin, who had three beautiful women by his side, massaging his legs and his shoulders. This young noble was dressed in red clothes. He held a cup of wine in his hands. He flicked a glance towards Ning, but paid him no heed.

“Look at that man dressed in furs. I wonder which wild, backwater region he came from. He has no class at all.”

“I can tell with a single glance that he doesn’t come from a major clan.”

Those beautiful, flower-like women aboard the ship all spoke as they

looked towards Ning. Whoosh! The large ship sped off into the distance, quickly disappearing from Ning's field of vision.

"That ship is rather fast, at least. I imagine that a Wanxiang Adept is controlling it." Ning still lay there in his own boat. It continued to 'slowly' and 'leisurely' advance at the rate of a hundred thousand kilometers each day. Actually, through the flying speed of a magic treasure, one could come to a rough determination regarding the strength of its controller.

"The closer we get to Stillwater City, the more frequently we encounter Immortal practitioners. That large vessel was the sixth one we have encountered." Ning sighed with emotion.

Stillwater City was the heart and core of the vast Stillwater Commandery. Immortals and devils congregated there. All of the larger clans, schools, and sects would establish a branch in Stillwater City. Many Loose Immortals also enjoyed to gather there in Stillwater City. Because so many Immortals and devils were there, all sorts of treasures were available in the city, which could be traded for.

In addition, the security of Stillwater City was excellent. One could peacefully train there.

"Time to rest." With but a thought, Ning sent his boat charging downwards, towards the desolate mountain forests below him.

Given Ning's current power, it was indeed quite hard for him to encounter true danger while he was adventuring. Only Primal Daoists could truly render him helpless, but which of the Primal Daoists wouldn't be hidden away in their own estates or caves, training? Even if they occasionally came out and wandered, they either travelled about in grand fashion or moved about tracelessly.

Whoosh. The boat charged into the mountain forest, then disappeared. Ning and the Whitewater Hound landed on the ground. "I should rest here, I suppose." Ning said. With a wave of his hand, he tossed out three formation flags which landed far into the distance, then disappeared without a trace.

From the outside world, one wouldn't be able to see Ning and the

Whitewater Hound within this area at all. Ning sat down in the lotus position, beginning to train quietly, the image of Lady Nuwa floating in his mind.

The Whitewater Hound took out a scroll as well, and it lay there, staring at the dense, complicated array of characters atop the scroll. This was a copy of the [Nine Scrolls on Formations]. Ning had the original [Nine Scrolls on Formations], and so by using a simple technique, 'Water Seal Technique', he had printed out two copies of the scrolls. He had left one with his tribe, then gave the other to the Whitewater Hound.

Uncle White was quite knowledgeable regarding formations. In fact, his accomplishments far outstripped Nong Zidao's; naturally, he surpassed Ning as well. Only, he hadn't had sufficiently good scrolls on formations to study from. Now that he acquired the [Nine Scrolls on Formations], he naturally spent every day studying it.

The skies slowly grew bright.

Ning rose to his feet. "Uncle White." Ning looked at the nearby Whitewater Hound, who was still lying there, staring at the scroll. Upon hearing Ning's shout, he immediately clambered to his feet, collecting the scroll.

"Let's go." Ning boarded the ship, with the Whitewater Hound following him. Swoosh! The flying boat immediately and quickly flew into the skies, continuing to head towards Stillwater City.

"Eh?" After flying just a few dozen kilometers, the boat suddenly came to a halt. Ning lowered his head, staring downwards. "What is it?" The Whitewater Hound looked at Ning.

"I sense a disturbance." Ning lowered his head, looking down at the mountainous forests beneath him. Based on the strengths of the ripples and the general location from which they came, he could tell that it should be Zifu Disciples who were battling. He immediately spread out his divine sense, quickly covering the mountain forest below him with it.

Even when he had first broken through to the level of manifesting his divine sense, Ning had been able to encompass a region of a hundred

kilometers. After the passage of half a year, his divine sense's reach had further expanded.

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Within the mountain forest.

"We are the disciples of the Meng clan." A handsome, pale-skinned youth was roaring in anger. By his side, there was a willowy, extremely beautiful maiden, along with an extremely muscular and sturdy, tiger-backed, bear-waisted youth. The three of them were struggling to defend against their attackers, who were a pair of white-robed men.

The two white-robed men had unleashed their magic treasures and had completely trapped the three of them. "Dregs of Snowdragon Mountain. Once my father learns of this, he will definitely annihilate you two pieces of trash." The handsome, white-skinned youth roared.

"If the two of you were to leave...our clan won't come take revenge for a trifling matter such as this. But if we die, our Meng clan will definitely investigate this matter to the very end." The willowy woman shouted in anger and fear as well.

Only that sturdy, muscular youth remained completely silent.

The three of them truly were disciples of the Meng clan. The Meng clan was one of the highly ranked, extremely large clans within Stillwater Commandery, even more powerful than Snowdragon Mountain. However, as one of the supreme clans...it had quite a bit internal strife as well. Even the Ji clan of the West Prefecture had its own internal struggles, much less a supreme, giant clan like this one. These three were ordinary in terms of talent, and they were born to a fairly low status within the clan. They weren't viewed as important, and found it hard to even gain a chance to learn some top-class techniques. Thus, after making their breakthrough to the early Zifu Disciple stage, they immediately joined forces and set out in the hopes of making it to Stillwatery City and joining a school.

There were quite a few disciples of major clans who would enter a school. Generally, they were all people who were not treated with importance in their own clans.

“Senior apprentice-brother, judging from their clothing, these three truly are of the Meng clan.” The two white-robed men were speaking mentally to each other. “Should we kill them?”

“Clearly, you don’t understand. A truly high-level member of the Meng clan, when setting out on a trip, will have an entire entourage of maids, servants, and guards. These three in front of us might truly be of the Meng clan, but even so, they definitely don’t have any important status within the clan. Kill’em.”

“Alright.”

The two white-robed men came to their decision, then immediately began to launch killing blows.

Chapter 2: Arrival

Originally, the combined forces of the three members of the Meng clan had been enough to just barely hold on, but when the two disciples of Snowdragon Mountain stopped holding back, the three Meng clan members instantly found fighting back much more taxing.

“If I had known this would happen, I would’ve listened to what Rocky said.” The beautiful, willowy maiden’s face was ashen. She was filled with regret. These three hadn’t dared to continue with their training after becoming Zifu Disciples, because if upon reaching the middle Zifu stage, their foundation would have solidified into a set pattern. Some of the more powerful schools wouldn’t be willing to take them on as disciples.

Thus, all three of them remained at the early Zifu Disciple stage. Prior to heading out, Meng Roch had said: “Little Xin, our power, amongst Zifu Disciples, is at the bottom end of the scale. If we were to fly on magic treasures, then once we are attacked...we will be in danger. I recommend we walk on the ground or ride on mounts, just like ordinary people, and travel slowly. Although it will take more time, it will be far safer. Immortal practitioners can’t be bothered to act against ordinary commoners.”

“You idiot.” The other fellow, Meng Jun, had said with anger, “Ride on a mount and travel slowly on the ground? That’s a distance of a million kilometers. We’ll probably spend a year before we arrive! Hiking up mountains and wading through lakes? Even if you are willing, I’m not. I refuse to believe that if we fly as fast as we can, with the goal of making it in a few days, we will be as unlucky as to encounter someone who attacks us.”

“Rocky, Meng Jun’s words are reasonable. It’s just a few days. There won’t be any problems.” Meng Xin hadn’t wanted to spend a full year, and so they decided to fly to Stillwater City.

Unfortunately...they really did encounter bandits. Some Immortal cultivators kept their heads down and toiled bitterly towards perfection, others relied on battle to grow, while still others relied on ambushing

and slaughtering. Ambushing and slaughtering was the fastest way to acquire treasures. There truly were quite a few who engaged in this line of work.

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“Slash.” One silk ribbon after another coiled about, defending against those encroaching flying swords, but the force of the impact still caused Meng Xin to vomit up a mouthful of blood. “Little Xin!” The nearby, straightforward man, Roch, grew frantic. He gritted his teeth, and his face suddenly turned red as his aura rose dramatically. The nine black stones flying about in front of him suddenly began to move at a far higher speed, and they howled through the air towards the two white-robed men.

“Hurry, leave, immediately leave!” Roch howled.

“Rocky!” Xin’s face changed. She naturally could tell that Roch had just used a forbidden technique. They had come on this trip to join a school. Using a forbidden skill resulted in harm to one’s cultivation foundation; most likely, it would be hard for him to join a good school now.

“Hurry and leave!” Roch seemed to be on the verge of insanity. “Hurry and leave!” The nearby, white-skinned youth had already transformed into a wisp of azure smoke, fleeing at high speed. Gritting her teeth, Xin followed after him and fled.

The two white-robed men, seeing this, just laughed coldly. They wanted to flee, as easy as that? Those two were dreaming.

Slash! Slash!

Suddenly, a blurred form emerged from the ground, moving as fast as lightning and piercing straight through the heads of those two white-robed men.

“How could this be?!” “How could...” The two white-robed men stared, their wide eyes filled with disbelief. The two of them had engaged in quite a few acts of banditry; they were extremely cautious. Even when engaging others in battle, they would pay close attention to their surroundings, but they hadn’t sensed any elemental Ki ripples earlier. And yet, they had been

suddenly ambushed by a flying sword beneath their feet, and their protective magic treasures hadn't stopped it at all.

Blood splattered everywhere, mixed in with a bit of white. The bodies of the two white-robed men went limp, and then they collapsed, life having fled.

"Kill, kill." The simple, straightforward Meng Roch was in a berserk state, frantically controlling those nine black stone globes. But suddenly, he saw, to his amazement...that the two white-robed men collapsed to the ground? Dead?

"But...but..." Roch couldn't believe it. As for Meng Jun, who had been fleeing at high speed, he turned to glance behind himself. Upon doing so, he saw those two white-robed figures, lying collapsed on the ground. Given his visual acuity as an Immortal practitioner, he could clearly see the bloodstains on the ground.

"Little Sister Xin!" Jun hurriedly sent. "Don't flee. Those two members of Snowdragon Mountain are dead." Xin couldn't help but come to a halt as well. She turned, only to see that those two figures that had been battling them earlier had indeed slumped to the ground.

"Come, let's go see what happened." Meng Jun said hurriedly. "Right." Meng Xin grew cautious as well. The two of them flew at high speed, returning to the scene of the previous battle. Jun and Xin had confusion on their faces. They stared at Roch, who appeared completely stunned. Jun then said, "Rocky, what happened?"

Bang! Suddenly, flames descended from the heavens, completely enveloping the bodies of those two members of Snowdragon Mountain, completely incinerating them.

"Fire!" The three members of the Meng clan were all startled. They watched as a figure emerged from the mountain forest, followed by the unclear outlines of a earthbound beast. When they took a closer look... they saw that it appeared to be a delicate-looking, fur-clad youth, along with a large, snowy white hound.

Swoosh. The fur-clad youth waved his hand, and the magic treasures left

behind by the incinerated members of Snowdragon Mountain all disappeared.

“Thank you, senior, for your kindness in saving our lives.” The simple, straightforward Roch fell to his knees, kowtowing to express his thanks.

“No need to show such great courtesy. No need to address me as senior either. We can simply address each other as fellow Daoist.” Ning couldn’t help but have a good impression of this straightforward man as he looked at him. Previously, he had been watching with divine sense, and had discovered that this man had used a forbidden technique and had gone berserk while instructing the woman to leave. This made Ning think of the uncle he had never met.

This was what his uncle had done; that was why Ning’s mother had been able to escape, which was why Ning was able to enter the world. Although Ning had moved quickly, and even used his divine will to control the Evanescent Demonslayer Sword to attack before he himself arrived, it would be hard for the honest-looking man to recover from the damage his usage of a forbidden technique had inflicted on himself. “What a pity.” Ning sighed to himself.

“Thank you, fellow Daoist.” The white-skinned youth hurriedly pulled the honest man to his feet. “The three of us are the disciples of the Meng clan. This is Meng Roch. Next to him is Meng Xin, while I am Meng Jun. Might I ask who you are, fellow Daoist?”

“Rocky.” Xin pulled at Roch’s hands as well, tears gathering in her eyes. At the same time, she looked towards Ning. Towards this fur-clad youth, she felt both curiosity and dread. Ning nodded. “My name is Ji Ning. I encountered the three of you by luck, on this trip to Stillwater City.”

“Brother Ji Ning, you are headed to Stillwater City as well?” The handsome, slender youth said with joy, “The three of us are headed to Stillwater City as well. Brother Ji Ning, would you be willing to travel along with us?”

Roch and that maiden, Xin, revealed expectant looks on their faces. Ning nodded slightly. “Alright!” Earlier, when he had stretched out his divine

sense, Roch had just executed that forbidden technique. Thus, Ning didn't know who these three were. Judging from their names, however, he could tell that they were from the same clan, and it seemed to be that they definitely weren't that old.

"A single clan actually sent out three Zifu Disciples, all of the same age." Ning mused to himself. "And all of the same surname, Meng. The map I have showing the various supreme powers include a clan named Meng."

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One of the reasons he elected to travel alongside these three, was that Ning wanted to learn more about the outside world from them. After all, the Ji clan's information regarding the outside world was far too sparse.

"Come, my friend Ji Ning, taste this wine. This was brewed within our Meng clan."

"My friend Ji Ning, come taste this fruit."

A large boat was sailing through the cloudy skies. Ning and the three members of the Meng clan were all seated. There was a table before them, and the table was covered with fruit and wine. Ning was clearly very powerful, and the three members of the Meng clan wished to befriend him. In addition, for Ning to travel with them meant that he was like a guardian spirit for them.

"So they truly are of the Meng clan." After having travelled with them for several days, Ning had learned more and more things. Of the three, Meng Jun was the most skilled in conversation as flattery; however, his flattery was too obvious, making Ning feel rather irritated by him.

Meng Xin was definitely an exceptional beauty, the likes of which would be hard to find in the Ji clan.

As for Meng Roch, that honest, straightforward man who had used the forbidden technique, he was the only one of the three whom Ning had a good impression of and was willing to make friends with.

"Meng Jun's words are correct." Xin shook her head, then said in a clear voice, "Our East Bend branch has always been squeezed and pressured.

Even the clansmen of the East Bend's main line of descent just barely get by. As for those of us from secondary lineages, our lives are even worse off...we are already lucky to have been able to reach the Zifu level in training. To acquire top-tier Ki Refining techniques? Completely impossible. The other Bends will all squeeze us and prevent our East Bend branch from growing. Thus, the three of us, after reaching the early Zifu stage, agreed to head out together to Stillwater City and settle within a major school in the city. We could go visit many schools and test them, one by one, but unfortunately, Rocky is already..."

Roch chuckled. "It's fine. It's enough that we are alive. I only use a forbidden technique once; the impact won't be great. No matter what, we are almost at Stillwater City! We'll have the opportunity to walk farther on the path of Immortals."

"Right. We've left the clan." Jun gritted his teeth. "When, in the future, we become Primal Daoists...hmp. All of those old fellows of the clan will come out and welcome us nervously."

"Move forward stably, step by step." Roch glanced at him. Jun immediately raised his head and sighed. "Unfortunately, the three of us are in an incomparably bad situation. We come from the exalted Meng clan, but our magic treasures were inferior to those two members of Snowdragon Mountain." Jun suddenly glanced towards Ning. "My friend, Ji Ning, your power is incredible. You killed those two members of Snowdragon Mountain as easily as killing chickens. I imagine that their magic treasures, my friend Ji Ning, are completely meaningless. My friend Ji Ning...how about bestowing me with one or two of the magic treasures, so as to allow our strength to rise. That way, we won't be slowing you down."

"Just one or two. I don't ask for too many." Jun stared at Ning, his eyes filled with eagerness. Ning frowned slightly. This Meng Jun...engaging in excessive flattery was one thing, but this? Ning realized that Meng Jun had a 'good point'; his tongue was completely shameless.

"No one feels irritated over having too many magic treasures." Ning glanced at Jun. "I am preparing to go to Stillwater City to trade for some

magic treasures, but I have too few on me. I'm afraid that I won't have enough. Fellow Daoist Meng Jun, how about loaning me one or two?"

Meng Jun's face turned white. He tittered nervously, but in his heart, he cursed, "How stingy. Last time, when I flattered young master Ruxu, young master Ruxu gifted me with a magic treasure. I've spent so much time flattering this Ji Ning and took out fine wine for him to drink, but I didn't gain anything from it. I saw how powerful he was and the fact that he had a Zifu-level spirit-beast, and thought that he must be quite incredible. But he's still stingy!"

Ning couldn't be bothered to even look at this Meng Jun. He had travelled with the three, primarily because he wanted to learn more about the outside world, and also because he felt kindly disposed towards Roch.

"Brother Ji Ning." Meng Xin suddenly pointed downwards and shouted, "Look, isn't that Stillwater City?" "Stillwater City?" Ning hurriedly turned to look as well.

Far in the distance, on the vast earth below them, there was an enormous, gigantic city. One couldn't see to the end of the city with the naked eye. Even though they were a thousand kilometers away, Ning could vaguely sense that a series of ripples was emanating from that vast, towering city. Although the ripples were seemingly weak, the power hidden within them was endless.

Ning, just staring at the city, felt an indescribable pressure emanating from it.

"We made it. Stillwater City." Ning's eyes were filled with anticipation. "Stillwater City." Jun, Roch, and Xin all had eagerness in their eyes as well. Eagerness towards the future.

Chapter 3: Meeting Northmont Baiwei Again

“I heard that it is forbidden to fly in the air above Stillwater City. If anyone dares to fly past its airspace, they will be in trouble,” Meng Jun said, while the others landed on the ground.

Ji Ning stared at the distant city of Stillwater. This was an unfathomably ancient city that had existed since the Fiendgod Era. They were currently only a few dozen kilometers away, but Ning could already sense the boundless torrent of elemental energy that was constantly coalescing within the city grounds. At the same time, a terrifying presence emanated out from it.

“The entire Stillwater City is like a gigantic formation; I imagine that there should be an Immortal-rank formation there,” Ning mused to himself. Ning and the other three members of the Meng clan hurried towards Stillwater City’s eastern gate. The eastern gate was three thousand meters wide and three hundred meters tall; from this, one could imagine how vast Stillwater City’s walls were.

“Your trading caravan has a total of 321 members. Pay three hundred kilograms of thundergold!” In front of Ning, there was an awe-inspiring merchant caravan, with almost all members being at the Xiantian level. The caravan handed over three hundred pieces of thundergold, and then received around three hundred black embossed books as they entered the city.

“The city entrance fee is two kilograms of thundergold.” A soldier dressed in Dao-armor barked towards Ning. Ning was leading the Whitewater Hound with him; naturally, they had to pay for two.

Ning waved his hand, retrieving two pieces of a golden metal that flashed with an azure light. This was thundergold. Its density vastly surpassed that of normal yellow gold’s. In the past, when Ning had purchased his Darknorth Swords, he had used just a small piece of thundergold...but to a Xiantian lifeform, two kilograms of thundergold

wasn't that valuable. To Ning, it was even less noteworthy.

“Alright.” Accepting the thundergold, the soldier handed out two black embossed books.

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Soon, the three members of the Meng clan and Ji Ning entered the city of Stillwater. The four of them flipped through the black embossed books in their heads, which had three characters on the cover: “Still” “Water” “City”. Upon taking a closer look, they discovered that it actually was a guide to the entire Stillwater City.

“Stillwater City is 9321 kilometers long and 8910 kilometers wide. It is divided into the east city, the south city, the north city, and the west city, and the Marquisate.” Ning read through the material clearly. The Marquisate was located at the very center of the city, and was roughly eight hundred kilometers in length. It was an absolutely forbidden territory! Entering without permission was a capital offense!

The east city, the south city, the north city; battle was forbidden in these regions, and they were safe places to live in. If anyone dared fight in the city, that would mean they were challenging the authority of the Marquisate of Stillwater! Thus, there were many, varied types of Immortal practitioners who lived in these three regions, and even some ancient Immortals would seclude themselves here and live peaceful lives.

“The west city?” Ning’s eyes lit up. The west city. This was the most bustling, lively part of Stillwater City! West Stillwater City was filled with many large estates, whose owners had exalted statuses or power rivaling the heavens. Naturally, there were some supreme clans, schools, and sects that who set up branches here as well. Many would come to Stillwater City and desire to take on a master, and these people would go to these branches to request admission. In addition, the west city had many merchants present as well.

There was just one thing! In the bustling, rowdy, lively west city, combat was only forbidden in the streets. As for the various estates? No matter how viciously or ferociously you battled within the branches of the various

schools and sects, it was fine. But of course, that was if the masters of those estates and branches permitted you to do this.

“Northmont Blacktiger.” Ning looked at his book, and at the names of the various estates that were situated in the west city. Amongst them was the name, ‘Northmont Blacktiger’.

“Northmont Blacktiger Estate. It has a perimeter of ten kilometers. In Stillwater City, where every inch of ground is as valuable as gold...for Northmont Blacktiger’s estate to be so large must mean that his power is astonishing,” Ning mused to himself. There were also quite a few member of high-level members of the Marquis of Stillwater’s Northmont clan who had set up their own estates outside as well. Still, the Northmont Blacktiger Estate, in terms of size, was absolutely supreme amongst them. From this, one could tell what a status he had!

“Oh!” Meng Jun slapped his head. “So apparently, although it is forbidden for people to fly about in the skies above Stillwater City, as long as you are at the level of a Primal Daoist, you are permitted to fly about! I thought that all people were forbidden from flying.” Meng Jun had previously spoken about this in absolute terms, but upon seeing the words written on the book regarding the actual rules, he immediately remedied his ignorance.

“Brother Ji Ning, West Stillwater City is an incomparably bustling place, especially the ‘Treasure Trading Plaza’.” Meng Jun said enticingly. “Let’s go take a look.”

“I’ve heard that there are thousands of Immortal practitioners who have set up shop at the ‘Treasure Trading Plaza’,” Meng Xin was also quite eager. Meng Roch nodded as well. “Let’s take a look then.” Ning was quite eager as well. The Treasure Trading Plaza was a place that had been specially set aside for Immortal practitioners to trade treasures.

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Ning’s group had entered from the gates of the east city. They had to pass through the entire Stillwater City in order to reach the west city. This was a journey of thousands of kilometers. Fortunately, all three of them

were Immortal practitioners...although they didn't dare to move too boldly and so didn't walk too quickly, in but a single hour, they had reached the Treasure Trading Plaza of West Stillwater City.

The Treasure Trading Plaza. This was actually an enormous public square, covered with a dense cluster of stalls. Many Immortal practitioners were here, having set up shop. Next to the stalls were various white stones that were covered with black words, explaining which treasures the stall owners were here to trade.

"So many." Ning held his breath. "At a glance, I can see at least ten thousand Immortal practitioners. Stillwater City truly lives up to its reputation as a gathering place for Immortals and Devils. It is the heart of the entire Stillwater Commandery. The Treasure Trading Plaza actually has so many people gathered here."

The Treasure Trading Plaza had all sorts of treasures, and even some extremely rare curious. The greatest benefit to conducting trade here was...it was comparatively cheaper! But the problem was...it wasn't safe enough!

This was because it was located in the west city. In the west city, only the streets were safe from battle. There were no proscriptions against battle in the Treasure Trading Plaza! It was absolutely possible that someone might appear to kill you and seize your treasures...but of course, this was still fairly rare, because generally speaking, anyone who dared to bring out sufficiently valuable treasures to display also was in possession of enough power to intimidate any thieves.

"Although battle is not forbidden in the Treasure Trading Plaza, there's no way to tell someone's power just by looking at them. Thus, how can anyone know how powerful someone else is? Perhaps the merchant might be a bored Primal Daoist out for some fun," Meng Xin said. Ning nodded.

"Little Jun!" Suddenly, a voice rang out. Meng Jun turned to look, and he was instantly delighted. "Third Uncle!" There was a balding, middle-aged man in the distance who was walking towards them, face covered with smiles.

Meng Xin and Meng Roch turned to look, immediately recognizing this man as well. They, too, hurriedly called out, "Uncle Ming!" "Haha, all three of you left your clan?" The balding, middle-aged man laughed. "It's good that you came out. In the clan, every day, you'd have to swallow your temper and suffer indignities. It's better to come out. Did the three of you just arrive in Stillwater City?"

Meng Jun hurriedly said, "We just arrived at Stillwater City. This time, we have come with the intention of finding a master. However, we were curious, and so we first came to pay a visit to the Treasure Trading Plaza."

"There's nothing special about the Treasure Trading Pavilion; it just has many different types of treasures, some of which might be valuable." The balding man shook his head. "However, one gets bored after spending too much time browsing. This is your first time visiting Stillwater City; in the future, after you enter a school, you won't have much free time to wander about. I've spent a century in Stillwater City; I'm very familiar with it. I'll take you around to tour it and see some truly excellent areas."

Meng Jun, Meng Xin, and Meng Roch were all overjoyed. "And this person is...?" The balding man had noticed Ning and the Whitewater Hound following behind Ning. Meng Jun glanced back at Ning, but didn't say anything. At first, he had constantly fawned over Ning, but after having received no benefits after so long, he had begun to look down on Ning. Now, after he saw his Third Uncle...he had naturally mentally discarded Ning already. In the future, he was going to join a school; why would he need to pay attention to this Ji Ning?

"This is Brother Ji Ning," Meng Xin said in a clear voice. "He saved the lives of us three." "Oh?" The balding, middle-aged man immediately said, "Then I truly must thank you, fellow Daoist Ji Ning. Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, why don't you come along with us? This will allow me to take better care of you, fellow Daoist, and show you proper thanks for your assistance."

"No need." Ning shook his head. Meng Xin and Meng Roch both looked at Ning, wanting to urge him to come. But Ning laughed and said, "Let's part here. For us to have met was a form of karma; in the future, if karma wills it, we will meet again." "Alright." Roch nodded.

As for the nearby Meng Jun, he quirked his lips. He just smiled towards Ning, not saying anything; however, his smile was clearly quite superficial. “What a shallow person,” Ning, seeing the way by which Meng Jun was acting, couldn’t help but muse to himself.

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After watching the three members of the Meng clan depart behind their Third Uncle, and especially the way in which Meng Jun continuously chattered with and flattered the old man, causing his face to be wreathed in smiles, Ning couldn’t help but shake his head.

By the time the Golden Crow was about to set beneath the western mountains, Ji Ning, who had strolled about for quite some time, finally arrived at the Northmont Blacktiger Estate.

“What a dominating estate.” Ning stared at the distant estate. Before the gates of this towering estate were rows of heroic-looking soldiers. The enormous stone sculpture of a black tiger which stood next to the gate was especially intimidating; the head of the black tiger stared down at the passerbys, appearing quite tyrannical. All the pedestrians walking through the nearby streets couldn’t help but unconsciously move a bit farther away, not daring to go too close.

As for Ji Ning, he walked straight towards it.

“Who goes there?” One of the soldiers standing at the gate to the Northmont Blacktiger Estate shouted. Ning understood; once one reached a distance of thirty meters of the estate without permission, the Northmont Blacktiger Estate’s forces could simply kill the oncomer.

Ning waved his hand, and the ‘Northmont Blacktiger’ insignia which Northmont Baiwei had given him appeared within it. Upon seeing the insignia, a smile immediately appeared on the soldier’s face, and he said with tremendous respect, “Might I ask who you have come to meet, milord? I will make the report.”

“I am Ji Ning. I have come to meet young master Northmont Baiwei,” Ning laughed. “I’ll have to trouble you to make the report.” “Alright, please wait a moment.” The soldier quickly charged into the estate. As for

the other estate guards, the look in their eyes as they glanced towards Ji Ning had become markedly more friendly. Still, they continued to stare icily towards the other pedestrians on the street.

“Hahaha...” Suddenly, loud, clear laughter rang out. A youth strode out quickly, dressed in a black uniform and with a crown on his head. Upon seeing Ning, his face became filled with excitement and joy. “Brother Ji Ning. I’ve waited so impatiently for you! You originally told me that you would come quite quickly, but in the blink of an eye, half a year has passed. You’ve truly broken my heart, hahaha. Your arrival in the city of Stillwater means that you’ve arrived in my home; there’s no need for you to worry yourself over anything. Leave everything to me.” As he spoke, he walked forward, pulling Ning by the arm in a very friendly manner. “Come, let’s enter the carriage.”

By his side, a carriage that seemed to be bathed in flames suddenly moved forward at high speed before coming to a halt outside the gates. In front of the carriage, there was a woman. The woman left the carriage, then said respectfully towards Northmont Baiwei, “Young master.”

Chapter 4: Ninestar Immortal Carriage

“Come aboard the carriage.” Northmont Baiwei pulled Ning up onto the carriage. The carriage was roughly fifteen or sixteen meters long; naturally, the insides of the carriage were extremely comfortable and spacious. Baiwei and Ning entered, then Baiwei hurriedly said, “Sit, sit.”

“This carriage is quite comfortable.” Ning couldn’t help but sigh as he spoke; there were twelve seats within the carriage, and the seats were all covered with incomparably soft furs, making sitting on them very comfortable. “Young master Baiwei, the flames that cover this carriage...?” Just now, he hadn’t sensed any particular power or presence from the flames.

“It’s just an appearance generated by an emanation of elemental energy.” Baiwei smiled as he spoke, then gave instructions to the outside: “Go to the Carefree Caverns.” “Yes, young master.” The woman outside immediately replied respectfully.

Whoosh. The flaming carriage immediately began to move forward at high speed. “Have you noticed? This female servant of mine, along with the carriage...both of them are constructs.” Baiwei smiled delightedly. “Ah?” Ning was surprised. “Constructs?” He really hadn’t noticed. After all, they were in the Northmont clan’s territory; Ning hadn’t dared to casually release his divine sense to investigate anything in depth.

“Right.” Baiwei said delightedly, “That female servant is a golem which my father bestowed upon me. It can explode forth with the combat power of a peak Wanxiang Adept...and it is completely fearless. It is the best guard one can ask for.” Ning nodded.

“As for this carriage, the carriage is named the Ninestar Immortal Carriage.” Baiwei’s face was covered with smugness. “Once it starts flying, not even a Primal Daoist can catch up to it; in addition, it also holds within it the Celestial Ninestar Flames. Once it unleashes those flames...it can incinerate anything and everything. Even some weaker Primal Daoist will be burnt to death by it!”

“What?!” Ning, hearing this, was shocked. Celestial Ninestar Flames? Capable of burning Primal Daoists to death? Even if it was ‘only’ capable of burning and killing some weaker Primal Daoists, this was still inconceivable. After all, it was nothing more than a precious construct.

“Haha.” Baiwei laughed, then said, “My father personally bestowed that female guard upon me, but I’m just temporarily borrowing this Ninestar Immortal Carriage. This Ninestar Immortal Carriage is the personal carriage of my father; even if I sold off all of my treasures, I wouldn’t be able to afford even the slightest part of it. I’m only permitted to borrow and use it within the borders of Stillwater City.”

Ning now understood. So this was the personal carriage of Northmont Blacktiger! This couldn’t help but make Ning sigh at how deep the roots of the Northmont clan were, here in Stillwater; even Northmont Blacktiger had a carriage as astonishing as this.

“A treasured construct on the level of this Ninestar Immortal Carriage actually possesses sentience.” Baiwei stroked the carriage, clearly quite fond of it. “Just now, when I gave instructions to go to the Carefree Caverns, I was actually speaking with the Immortal Carriage itself. This Ninestar Immortal Carriage will automatically lead us there.”

Ning had to admit; this really was incredible and impressive! One did indeed gain great face when riding in this Immortal Carriage, capable of resisting even Primal Daoists. This made Ning fully understand how wealthy and luxurious a lifestyle the Northmont clan of Stillwater was.

“Look outside.” Baiwei pointed towards the outside world. Ning looked through the windows. This Ninestar Immortal Carriage moved extremely rapidly, and the streets of Stillwater City were incomparably wide; the scenes of the outside world passed by in a flash.

“The most mysterious, inscrutable part of the entire Stillwater City is the west city.” Baiwei pointed towards the outside. “After entering Stillwater City, you should’ve seen a book describing Stillwater City. Although the book has the names and signs of the various estates, have you noticed something?”

“I’ve noticed that the Northmont Blacktiger Estate is quite large,” Ning laughed. “Haha, there are a total of more than a thousand estates with the name ‘Northmont’ in front of them. All of them are the estates of members of the Northmont clan with some status. The estates are divided into three sizes; with a perimeter of ten kilometers, a perimeter of one kilometer, and a perimeter of three hundred meters.” Baiwei smiled. “But if you were to believe that these are the estates of the powerful members of our Northmont clan, you would be completely wrong.” “Eh?” Ning was puzzled.

“The book should also have quite a few estates which only have a name and no clan, such as ‘Kind Waters Estate’, ‘Universal Light Estate’, etc...” Baiwei looked at Ning, who nodded. There were indeed some estates like this. He didn’t know what the origins of these estates were.

“These are all the private estates of Primal Daoists, as well as some Immortals.” Northmont Baiwei looked at Ning. “Even some of the Immortals of our Northmont clan, due to having lived extremely long lives, no longer use the ‘Northmont’ name in titling their estates. This makes it so that it is very hard for outsiders to truly understand how many Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals our Northmont clan of Stillwater has.” Ning was secretly surprised upon hearing this.

“Many of the estates are empty.” Northmont Baiwei very calmly discussed these rather secretive matters. “In the vast, endless lands of the Darcian Dynasty, there are some extremely mighty powers. If they pay a visit to our Stillwater City, our Northmont clan will gift them with a private estate. Although they will come visit only very occasionally, we will always keep these estates in good condition.”

“And So...West Stillwater City is truly a place where fish and dragons swim together. The more mysterious and unknown the owners of an estate are, the less you can afford to offend them,” Baiwei said. “As for North Stillwater City, many of the estates there have been taken over by the Raindragon Guard.”

“Raindragon Guard?” Ning said in surprise, “I heard that the Raindragon Guard’s headquarters in Stillwater Commandery is atop an incomparably

towering mountain.”

“Right. It isn’t too far away; its name is the Crimson Dragon Mountains.” Baiwei shook his head and laughed. “The full members of the Raindragon Guard are all quite free and unrestrained; who would be willing to remain atop that desolate mountain? Given how bustling and lively Stillwater City is, and how they also have responsibility for maintaining oversight over the various major powers within Stillwater City, the Raindragon Guards naturally have occupied quite a large amount of land.” Ning nodded.

“Most of the north city is occupied by the Raindragon Guard. In the south city, most of the residences are occupied by the Immortal practitioners that make up the soldiers of our army.” Baiwei laughed. “This is something of an open secret, but naturally, this won’t be recorded in those simple information pamphlets given to everyone who enters the city.”

“Only the east city has many major trading unions and guilds, along with Loose Immortals, who gather there.”

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As they continued to advance forward, Baiwei told Ning about some secrets, but only those which many people would learn upon reaching a certain level. This truly broadened Ning’s horizons.

As for the east city, there were many places for entertainment present. The most famous of those places was the Mountain of Heavenly Treasures! “The Mountain of Heavenly Treasures takes up an area of six hundred kilometers. It is a mountain located within the city itself, and the entire mountain is hollow. There are countless treasures within, along with merchants selling spirit-beasts and slaves, and all sorts of gambles and battles...in short, any sort of entertainment you can think of, the Mountain of Heavenly Treasures has it.”

Baiwei shook his head and said resignedly, “However, this Heavenly Treasures Mountain has the imperial clan of the Darcian Dynasty standing behind it! In this vast world, every single commandery city has a Heavenly Treasures Mountain within it. I can’t even imagine how much

wealth they have accumulated for the Darcian Dynasty.”

“The place I’m taking you to, right now, is named ‘Carefree Cave’.” Baiwei winked towards Ning. “The two most exquisite entertainment venues in the entire Stillwater City are the Heavenly Treasures Mountain and the Carefree Cave.”

“The Heavenly Treasures Mountain is something that can be seen throughout the Darcian Dynasty. But the Carefree Cave is unique to our Stillwater City, and it was established by three Celestial Fox Immortals.” Baiwei chortled, “But of course, it also has the support of our Northmont clan of Stillwater. After all, we can’t let the Heavenly Treasures Mountain make all the money, right?” Ning laughed as well.

“Young master. We are here.” The voice came from outside. As it did, the speed of the Ninestar Immortal Carriage quickly dropped as well. Baiwei led Ning out of the carriage, then pointed to an incomparably vast edifice in front of them. “This is the Carefree Cavern.”

Ning instantly grew rather stunned. He saw, far away, an enormous, incomparably beautiful, dreamlike edifice. It was shaped into the form of a titanic fox; this was a giant building that appeared like a fox that was hundreds of kilometers long. Its entrance was the mouth of the fox, which had its head resting against the ground. The dense natural elemental energy in the surrounding area made Ning feel incomparably comfortable.

The Whitewater Hound leapt out of the carriage as well. Staring at this alongside Ning, it too had a look of shock in its eyes.

“Young master Baiwei, please, come, come.” Instantly, a tall, muscular, ox-horned man ran over. His aura rolled out in waves, startling Ning; this monster clearly wasn’t hiding its aura at all, which allowed Ning to verify that it should be at the Wanxiang Adept level.

“Mmm.” Northmont Baiwei nodded casually. “And this one is...?” The Greater Monster looked towards Ning. “This is my good friend, young master Ji Ning.” Baiwei explained. The Greater Monster hurriedly nodded. “Is this your first time, young master Ji Ning?” Appearing quite courteously, he led the way forward.

Ning swept his gaze forward. He quickly discovered that there were many people who had entered the Carefree Caverns to enjoy themselves; however, most didn't have any attendants come welcome them. Although some occasionally did, most of the attendants were at the Xiantian lifeform level, or at most at the Zifu Disciple level. Only Northmont Baiwei had a Wanxiang-level Greater Monster welcome him.

Ning and the Whitewater Hound followed Northmont Baiwei forward. The wide, spacious corridor was beautiful and almost dreamlike. Soon, they exited it and arrived at an enormous hall. At the left side of the main hall was a row of individuals who were either monsters or beautiful female Immortal practitioners. To the right, there was a row of individuals who were either monsters or handsome male Immortal practitioners.

"We respectfully welcome young master Northmont and young master Ji." In unison, the individuals all bowed with respect, their sleeves drooping to the ground.

Upon being welcomed so respectfully by so many monsters and Immortal practitioners, and especially upon hearing them all call out loudly, Ning was instantly stunned. Fortunately, his soul was very strong, and so he quickly came to his senses.

"How incredible. The Carefree Caverns really live up to their reputation as a place established by three Celestial Fox Immortals and the Marquisate of Stillwater." Ning sighed in amazement.

There were currently many guests seated within the main hall, and amongst them were four people Ning knew quite well.

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Meng Jun, Meng Roch, and Meng Xin had been led by the uncle of their clan into the Carefree Caverns as well. That balding, middle-aged man had said, "The Carefree Caverns are the most top tier of top tier entertainment sights. In terms of sheer pleasure, it is actually superior to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain. There are delicacies here which those of you back in the clan would never be able to even imagine. You will soon enter various schools, and so today, I'll show you around here and broaden

your horizons.”

“Is this the silverpike of Jimin?” Meng Jun ate while sighing in praise. As for Xin and Roch, they were clearly also eating quite happy.

Next to them was a Xiantian monster who had transformed into a beautiful woman, who was dancing about gracefully. There were also human Xiantian maidens who were playing the zither...

“Eh?” The balding, middle-aged man suddenly turned his head. Through another corridor of the main hall, a group of beautiful women suddenly appeared, either emanating a monstrous aura or an Immortal practitioner’s aura. A similar group of men appeared as well. They divided up into two rows, as though respectfully awaiting someone’s arrival.

“A major figure has arrived.” The balding, middle-aged man said hurriedly. “What’s that?” Roch turned to look, puzzled. Xin called out in surprise, “All of them are releasing their auras. It seems they are all Zifu-level Greater Monsters or Immortal practitioners.”

“Wow, what sort of a person are they here to welcome?” Meng Jun’s eyes began to shine. If he was able to make friends with this major figure, wouldn’t he instantly rise to the heavens? Suddenly...

The two rows of stunningly beautiful and handsome men and women, who lined up deep into the recesses of the corridor, all said with great courtesy, “We respectfully welcome young master Northmont and young master Ji.” Their voices echoed within the main hall.

“Young master Northmont?” The balding, middle-aged Third Uncle immediately said in a low voice, “This is someone from the Northmont clan of the Marquisate of Stillwater, and definitely someone in the main lineage with a high status. Otherwise, there is no way the Carefree Caverns would treat him with such great ceremony. But who is this young master Ji?”

“Let’s see what sort of major figure of Stillwater City this is.” Meng Jun immediately looked over carefully. In fact, quite a few people were looking towards the distant corridor.

A youngster dressed in a black uniform and a crown walked in. By his side was a youth clad in fur. Behind them was a Godbeast Whitewater Hound, along with a female servant.

“Brother Ji Ning?” Meng Jun, Meng Xin, and Meng Roch were all completely stunned.

Chapter 5: Joining A School

Wasn't that Ji Ning, who had previously saved them? By his side was that Godbeast, the Whitewater Hound.

For a period of time, Meng Jun, Meng Roch, and Meng Xin's hearts were filled with incomparably complex feelings. "Young master Ji Ning is this incredible?" Xin murmured to herself softly. "I knew all along that Brother Ji Ning was an extraordinary person." Roch sighed.

As for Jun, a sunken, dark look was on his face. Previously, on their way over together with Ji Ning to Stillwater City, Jun had realized that Ning didn't possess much worldly experience. In experience, Ning was very stingy. Thus, he ceased flattering Ning, and even went so far as to not even bother putting on a pretense of cordiality. He knew that Ning had opinions about him, but in the past he hadn't cared about that. Now, however, he understood that it was probably too late for him to repair the relationship between himself and Ning.

"Is it so very glorious and amusing for an honorable, exalted young master to pretend to be a bumpkin?" Meng Jun felt hidden resentment in his heart. "And you dressed in those furs. You really know how to put on an act! Now look at how arrogantly you are acting today. I refuse to believe that in the future, I won't surpass you!"

Each of the three members of the Meng were sighing for different reasons. By their side, their Third Uncle spoke out. "The Ji Ning we previously met at the Treasure Trading Plaza? Young master Ji?" The bald Third Uncle was shocked. He then said regretfully, "Alas, I didn't expect that young master Ji had such an incredible status. I actually missed the chance to befriend a person like him; what a pity, what a pity!"

Meng Jun's face became all the uglier to behold. Just you wait, he told himself. He would show them all!

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Ning felt extremely stunned to have been welcomed by so many beautiful women, handsome men, and Greater Monsters, all of whom

were at the Zifu Disciple level. For so many Greater Monsters and Immortal practitioners to work here as servants...this showed how formidable those three Celestial Fox Immortals were, and also how much time and effort the Marquisate of Stillwater had expended on the Carefree Caverns.

“The Carefree Caverns are quite a relaxing, entertaining place. Even Immortals wouldn’t dare act brashly here.” Northmont Baiwei led Ning inwards. The two constantly advanced through the wide, winding hallways, the Whitewater Hound and the maidservants following behind them.

In the blink of an eye, they had walked more than thirty kilometers. To Immortal practitioners, this truly was a short distance. What stunned Ning the most was that the ceiling of the thirty-kilometer walkway was studded with many enormous jewels which flashed with all sorts of colors. This made the walkway appear both beautiful and dreamlike. Ning had seen some things in his life already, but jewels of such size...the Ji clan had never possessed any like them.

“These are jewels which were brought here, with great effort, from the depths of the North Sea. Every single one is a precious item that can be used to refine magic treasures, and they are also luminous by nature, being capable of drawing in elemental energy. A single one of these jewels is worth approximately as much as a single Earth-ranked magic treasure.” Baiwei continued in a soft voice, “The total value of the jewels and decorations in the entire Carefree Caverns is enough to render even an Immortal speechless and stupefied.”

Ning, himself, was speechless as well. Extravagant. Truly extravagant!

“We need to be able to compete with the Heavenly Treasures Mountain,” Baiwei said softly. “The luxuriousness of the Carefree Caverns is definitely not inferior to that of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.”

Suddenly, a pink-clothed woman with furry ears and a fox’s tail came towards them from afar. Her smile seemed to be filled with an innate charm and allure. She stepped forward, one step at a time, her fox’s tail

swaying along with her rear in an undulating, enticing manner. Ning was instantly stunned as well, but soon afterwards, he regained his calm.

“Eh?” The pink-clothed woman looked at Ning in astonishment, then she laughed. “This must be young master Ji. It seems this is your first time here.” Northmont Baiwei laughed loudly. “This is my brother Ji Ning’s first visit to Stillwater City. I brought him here to show him our Stillwater City’s Carefree Caverns. It seems, Miss Ziyi, you aren’t very happy by the fact that my brother wasn’t bewildered by your charms.”

“I wouldn’t dare.” Miss Ziyi laughed. “Young master Baiwei, the same place as usual?” “Naturally.” Northmont Baiwei nodded.

Miss Ziyi looked carefully at Ning, then led the way forward. In front of them was an enormous hall. The entire hall had a circumference of many kilometers, and atop the hall were many jewels of different colors. The floor of the hall was covered with thirty-meter tall sea corals, along with varied other decorations. The entire hall was decorated like an abode from Immortals.

Although Ning had the benefit of his memories from his previous life, he was still stunned. This was a hall that was kilometers in size, decorated with all sorts of marvelous items. Even in his past life, he had never been as stunned as he was today.

There were tens of women who were fluttering about in a dance within the hall, as well as tens of master musicians playing the zither and other instruments.

“Young master Baiwei, young master Ji, please, this way.” Miss Ziyi led them towards an arched entrance that hung in the air, then pushed the door open. Within, there was a secluded, refined private room that was more than thirty meters long.

“Arrange for the Hundred Treasures Banquet,” Northmont Baiwei instructed. “Alright.” Miss Ziyi immediately departed, leaving only Ning, Baiwei, the Whitewater Hound, and that female servant within the secluded room.

“This is a place that must have been sculpted with the hands of the

heavens.” Ning walked to the sides of the room. He stared through the completely open window, able to see straight down to the massive hall that was kilometers in size.

“This is nothing.” Northmont Baiwei lowered his voice to a whisper. “The Carefree Caverns have many places for enjoyment. Some of them, even I am not permitted to enter. For example, the legendary ‘Palace of Immortals’.”

“Palace of Immortals?” Ning was startled. “Indeed. Only Immortals or extremely important figures are permitted to enter. Supposedly, Primal Daoists are responsible for serving them; on occasion, even one of those three Celestial Fox Immortals will personally go welcome them.” Baiwei continued, “Stillwater City is the heart of the entire Stillwater Commandery. Thus, most of the Immortals are gathered here. Normally, when they hold meetings, they hold them within the Carefree Caverns. Only, when they enter the Carefree Caverns, they will directly through in through the air, and then enter through a private, exclusive entrance.”

Ning nodded. Immortals? Given how vast Stillwater Commandery was, and how long it had been in existence for, there truly were quite a few Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals present here. Thus, only a school that had an Immortal guarding it could truly be considered a supreme, top-tier school. Those which did not have any Immortals, such as Snowdragon Mountain, were clearly on a lower level.

These Immortals were truly the most supreme of individuals within the entire Stillwater Commandery. They alone would decide the fate of Stillwater Commandery, decide the fates of its countless tribes, decide who would rise and who would fall. Even the Marquisate of Stillwater had to curry favor with these Immortals.

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One platter of precious delicacies after another was brought in. They even prepared a secondary side banquet for the Whitewater Hound, and all of the foods they prepared were those which Godbeast Whitewater Hounds loved to eat. All of the food was extremely exquisitely made. They

all had extraordinary pedigrees. Ning, just listening to the servants describe each of the dishes, began to grow hungry.

After they ate for quite some time...

“You can leave for now,” Baiwei instructed his servant. “Yes.” The maidservant left respectfully.

“Ji Ning.” Baiwei lifted his beaskull goblet of wine. “Previously, you mentioned to me that you are going to enter a school. Have you made your choice?” “Not yet.” Ning shook his head. “Brother Baiwei, can you introduce me to some?” Baiwei immediately asked, “What are your requirements?”

“I hope that my school will have divine abilities, top-tier Ki Refining techniques, and ideally specialize in sword techniques,” Ning said. Divine abilities and Ki Refining techniques...these would be for establishing his training foundations. However, the Dao he had gained insight into and the Dao he had embarked upon was the Dao of the sword. On the path of Immortals, one’s insights into the Dao was one’s truest foundation.

“Oh?” Baiwei pondered momentarily, then laughed. “You want a school that has divine abilities, top-tier Ki Refining techniques, and which specializes in sword techniques...I do, in fact, have a school to recommend.” Ning’s eyes lit up.

“This school is named the Skysplitter Sword Sect.” Baiwei said with great confidence, “This Skysplitter Sword Sect is ranked as one of the top three major sects within Stillwater Commandery. In the past, didn’t you have some disputes with Snowdragon Mountain? Compared to them...well, Snowdragon Mountain simply can’t compare. This Skysplitter Sword Sect has at least three Immortals! As for Primal Daoists, it has tens of them! Zifu Disciples? It has more than ten thousand!”

Ning was rendered speechless. Tens of Primal Daoists and three Immortals? This, alone, was enough to stun Ning. Generally speaking, a single Immortal was enough to make a sect a supreme sect. But at least three Immortals? No wonder it was ranked amongst the top three major sects within Stillwater Commandery!

“The Skysplitter Sword Sect is famous for its sword techniques.” Baiwei continued quickly, “Just from the name ‘Skysplitter Sword Sect’, you should realize that they are celebrated for their swordplay. More than eighty million years has passed since the founder of the Skysplitter Sword Sect established the sect. The founder of the Skysplitter Sword Sect was a Loose Immortal who had lived for hundreds of thousands of years. He truly was an incredible figure.”

“Given how much time has passed since its founding till now...the amount of sword techniques its successive generations have developed is most likely innumerable.” Baiwei looked at Ning. “It is estimated that this school has at least two or three divine abilities as well, and it certainly must have many supreme Ki Refining techniques. Otherwise, there is no way it could have given rise to so many Immortals.”

A look of excitement appeared on Ning’s face. What a school! There was shade to be found beneath the eaves of a large tree. If he was going to rely on the power of a school to increase his own power, then naturally he had to choose a mighty school.

“This Skysplitter Sword Sect has a branch within Stillwater City. Generally speaking, it will only officially accept new students during the twelfth lunar month. Although there is one more month before then...I’ll take you there tomorrow. I’ll simply need to say a few things to them, and this matter will be settled in advance.” Baiwei smiled as he spoke.

Ning revealed a look of excitement and joy. “Thank you, Brother Baiwei.” “Haha, Ji Ning, for you to join the Skysplitter Sword Sect is their great fortune.” Baiwei laughed loudly. Suddenly, his eyes lit up. He stared down through the open window to the nearby corridor it overlooked, then called out in a high voice, “Brother Zhou Li!” A white-clothed man below them raised his head, then laughed and said, “Brother Baiwei.”

“Brother Zhou Li, why don’t you come up for a few moments?” Baiwei called out in a loud voice. “Alright.” The white-clothed man laughed, nodded, then moved towards the corridor.

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Baiwei hurriedly said to Ning, "This person, Zhou Li, is one of the disciples of the Skysplitter Sword Sect who has been sent to stay in Stillwater City. He is a Wanxiang Adept, and quite influential within the Skysplitter Sword Sect. We just need to mention this matter to him. As long as he says yes, then the matter of you entering the Skysplitter Sword Sect will be settled." Ning now understood.

A knocking sound could be heard. Baiwei hurriedly rose, personally going to open the door. Ning, naturally, followed behind him to welcome the man.

"Hahaha, Brother Zhou Li, just now, I was discussing your Skysplitter Sword Sect, and now you appear. Isn't this quite the coincidence?" Baiwei immediately said, "Let me make an introduction. This is my extremely good friend, Ji Ning!"

"Brother Ji Ning." The white-clothed Zhou Li, upon hearing Baiwei describe Ning as 'my extremely good friend', didn't dare to treat Ning lightly, immediately clasping his hands in greeting as he spoke.

"Brother Zhou Li." Ning returned the greeting. Baiwei immediately said, "Come, come in and sit." "Not now." The white-clothed Zhou Li immediately explained, "I'm here on someone's invitation, and I must go meet with them. Brother Baiwei, if there is anything you need, feel free to tell me."

Baiwei immediately said, "I'll speak frankly then. This Brother Ji Ning of mine has heard of the fame and reputation of the Skysplitter Sword Sect, and his heart was stirred. He would like to enter your Skysplitter Sword Sect, and so I wanted to let you know about this, Zhou Li. I trust that once you give the word, this matter will be settled."

"Oh?" The white-clothed man, Zhou Li, looked towards Ning. He asked Ning, "Brother Ji Ning, what level have you trained to?" Ning replied, "I'm a twin-refiner; both a Ki Refiner and a Fiendgod Body Refiner. Both are at the early Zifu stage."

"Hahaha, early Zifu stage? Good." The white-clothed Zhou Li immediately felt relieved. Laughing, he said with confidence, "When

accepting new disciples, our greatest concern is that they might have trained in some superficial, inferior techniques and destroyed their future potential. Since you are at the early Zifu stage...your foundation hasn't yet become fixed and immutable. Just let me give the word first, and when the time of the twelfth lunar month comes, you can go to our local branch of the Skysplitter Sword Sect. You will immediately be accepted."

"Excellent." Baiwei laughed, then said in praise, "Ji Ning, await the twelfth lunar month. When it comes, you will be a disciple of the Skysplitter Sword Sect."

Ning nodded gently. The Skysplitter Sword Sect? In the future, he was going to be a disciple of the Skysplitter Sword Sect!

Chapter 6: Encountering Northmont Fox

The door to the refined room closed once more.

“You can stop worrying now.” Northmont Baiwei sat down, then picked up the exquisitely made wine flask and poured Ji Ning a cup of wine. “With Zhou Li’s assistance, after you enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect, you won’t suffer much.”

“Suffer much?” Ning raised an eyebrow. Baiwei shook his head. “It’s a major sect, after all, with more than ten thousand Zifu Disciples. Given how many disciples it holds, I imagine you can guess for yourself how frenetic its internal struggles can be. The disciples are all divided into various levels. As a new disciple, if there is no one there to help you, I imagine that you will be treated worse than any of the others.”

Ning nodded gently. It was true. Wherever there were people, there would be competition. A major sect with more than ten thousand disciples...its internal struggles would indeed be quite fierce.

“With Zhou Li’s assistance, it will be a bit easier for you to rise.” Baiwei continued, “But afterwards, you’ll still have to rely on yourself and to fight for yourself! Remember; opportunity comes to those who fight for them. Don’t show any mercy. Although I don’t know the details of the situation, this sort of major sect surely must run internal competitions so as to divide up its disciples into various levels. In these competitions, do your best to be number one and become one of the most core disciples of the Skysplitter Sword Sect.”

“Definitely!” Ning understood this principle. In the Ji clan, he would be given the best of everything, but in an outside school, he would have to fight for whatever he wanted.

“When you are free, please come visit Stillwater City often. I can introduce some friends to you.” Northmont Baiwei smiled. “The path of Immortals is an incomparably difficult one. With powerful friends by your side, things will become much easier. Look...take a look at this person who just came in.” Ning turned to look through the window.

Miss Ziyi had personally gone to greet this person. The person she had gone to greet was an extremely handsome young lord, who had more than ten people in his entourage behind him.

“His bearing is extraordinary,” Ning said with praise. “This person’s name is Hun Wuji.” Baiwei said solemnly, “He is a formidable fellow. As for his clan, the Hun clan, it is an enormous merchant clan.”

Ning was startled. Enormous merchant clan? A merchant? Generally speaking, most of the major powers were sects, schools, or tribes; there were very few organizations solely dedicated to trade.

“The Hun clan is no ordinary merchant clan.” Baiwei continued, “Their business is spread throughout virtually the entire Darcian Dynasty. Although they can’t be considered to stand at the very top-tier of the Darcian Dynasty, here in Stillwater Commandery, they are one of the top two major merchant clans! And this clan rose to power only a few short millennia ago.”

Ning said, startled, “Just a few thousand years ago?” Baiwei smiled. “The founder of the Hun clan was named Hun Tianyou. He’s still alive. You tell me; how long ago was this clan established?”

Ning was shocked. Only a few thousand years had passed since the clan had been established, and yet it was already one of the top two major merchant clans of the entire Stillwater Commandery, and had spread its trade throughout the entire Darcian Dynasty. This was indeed astonishing.

“This founder and Patriarch of the Hun clan, Hun Tianyou, was originally an orphan and a gangster.” Baiwei laughed as he spoke. “He himself gave himself the surname of ‘Hun’, symbolizing his original status as a gangster. He then gave himself the name ‘Tianyou’, meaning ‘protected by heaven’, as he was born as an orphan and kept alive through the grace of the heavens.”

“This Patriarch of the Hun clan...he wasn’t that talented in the path of cultivation. He became a Zifu Disciple early on, and then began to truly focus his attention on building up his business. Who would have imagined that he truly would rise to such heights?” Baiwei sighed, moved. “Audacious

yet prudent, and viciously decisive...this person truly is a towering, heroic figure. In fact, when he was merely a Wanxiang Adept, he managed to employ three Immortals to have them kill his enemies.”

“He employed three Immortals?” Ning was speechless. Baiwei continued, “This Patriarch of the Hun clan relied on his tremendous wealth to forcibly increase his power to his current level, that of a Primal Daoist. Don’t be fooled by the fact that the entire Hun clan only has a total of two Primal Daoists. The amount of wealth they possess...compared to your enemy, Snowdragon Mountain, they are unfathomably more powerful.”

Ning nodded. For someone at the Wanxiang Adept level to be able to employ three Immortals...one could imagine how wealthy he now was.

“The Hun clan is one of the most supreme clans within our Stillwater Commandery.” Baiwei continued, “For them to reach such a level in just a thousand years...how formidable! As for that Hun Wuji who just entered? He’s the most prominent person in the younger generation of the Hun clan. He is viewed with great favor by the Patriarch of the Hun clan. Naturally, we need to be friends with people like this.”

“Within the borders of our Stillwater Commandery, the Hun clan is like the embodiment of the God of Wealth.” Baiwei continued, “On the path of Immortals, wealth is very important as well.”

Ning nodded. He understood; magic treasures, unique items, and even spirit-pills were all important. “Borrow from the strengths of those around you,” Baiwei continued, “And make the strengths of others your own strengths. Only then will you be able to walk further along the path of Immortals!” Ning nodded.

“Ji Ning, I trust that in the future, you will definitely become a towering figure somewhere.” Baiwei seemed to speak with great confidence. Ning replied, “Brother Baiwei, you treat me so well that I truly don’t know how to repay you.”

Baiwei immediately waved his hand. “This is what my father taught me; when you encounter someone you view as worth making friends with, you must treat them with sincerity! As for those not worthy of being your

friends? I, Northmont Baiwei, wouldn't even glance at them." Ning laughed.

"You must be sincere to your friends. Otherwise, you won't be able to make any true friends. Then, when a critical time comes, none of those 'friends' will help you," Baiwei said. "Well-spoken," Ning concurred. Only when you treated others with sincerity would they treat you with sincerity.

"If you make friends everywhere, you will naturally build up your own strength. Ji Ning, make some powerful friends. Within, you will rely on your own power; without, you will have your friends to assist you. In the end, you might end up becoming the leader of the Skysplitter Sword Sect," Baiwei laughed.

Suddenly, laughter rang out from outside. "Hahaha..." The laughter was quite loud, and it echoed throughout the giant main hall of many kilometers. Upon hearing this laughter, the face of Northmont Baiwei, who had been chatting happily with Ning, immediately sank.

"Northmont Baiwei." That deep voice echoed in the main hall, filling every corner of it. Quite a few of the guests within the various luxurious rooms at the ends of the corridors that hung in midair were listening with curiosity.

"You want for your good friend, 'Ji Ning', to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect?" That deep voice continued to laugh wildly. "Hahaha, unfortunately, I can tell you something right now...and in fact, I can tell this Ji Ning kid directly. Ji Ning, kid, forget about ever being permitted into joining the Skysplitter Sword Sect!"

"Northmont Fox!" Baiwei suddenly roared out with anger. "What is it?" That deep voice let out a chuckle. "Are you upset?" Baiwei growled and cursed, "You shameless thing!"

"You do seem quite pissed." That deep voice chuckled with delight. "Unfortunately, your good friend won't be able to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect." "Hmph." Baiwei no longer paid the outside world any attention. That deep voice said a few more mocking lines, but upon seeing that Baiwei was no longer responding, it fell silent as well.

Ning frowned, then said in a soft voice, "Brother Baiwei, who was that?" Baiwei's face was exceedingly ugly to behold right now. He hurriedly said, "Ji Ning, I truly apologize. I didn't expect that your affairs would be disrupted because of me. That person is named Northmont Fox. He, too, is a member of our Northmont clan." Ning nodded.

"My father is Northmont Blacktiger. His father is Northmont Yin." Baiwei shook his head. "His father and my father are competing to become the next Marquis of Stillwater."

Ning sucked in a cold breath of air. The next Marquis of Stillwater? It seemed Northmont Blacktiger's status was incredibly high. No wonder, as soon as Baiwei came to the Carefree Caverns, Wanxiang Adept-level cultivators and monsters had come to greet him in such a grand fashion.

"His father and mine have always been opposing each other. Thus, this kid always is struggling against me as well." Baiwei let out a snicker. "His father, Northmont Yin, truly is a heroic, towering figure, as crafty as a fox. Northmont Yin gave his son the name 'Fox', but all his son is capable of is petty scheming."

"I truly do have to apologize. Because of me, you won't be able to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect," Baiwei said. "For Northmont Fox to proclaim it so boldly means that he definitely must be confident of being able to ensure it."

Ning felt resignation in his heart. Just now, he was fantasizing about how viciously he would 'compete', but in the blink of an eye, it had all disappeared. He immediately said, "This is just a small matter. Stillwater Commandery is such a large place, and there are so many schools here. There are many different places I can choose from."

"Right." Baiwei continued, "How about this. Later, I'll arrange for information regarding the various schools of Stillwater Commandery to be brought over. You can choose for yourself. When the twelfth lunar month comes, the various schools will all be accepting new disciples. You can go by yourself. If I don't go with you, I can't cause any problems. Given your abilities, it will be very easy for you to join a school. To be honest, my

actions just now were unnecessary to begin with.”

Ning laughed, “We were just a bit unlucky to have encountered this Northmont Fox.”

So what if he didn’t enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect? Even the ancient spirit of the underwater estate, after seeing that Ning had mastered the Rainwater Sword Domain, had treated him in a markedly different way. Ning felt certain that it would definitely be simple for him to choose any other schools.

Knock, knock, knock. A knocking sound at the door. “Brother Baiwei. I am Hun Wuji.” A voice rang out from outside. “Wuji, please, come in. Why even knock?” Baiwei hurriedly called out. The door opened.

A handsome, refined young man entered. This Hun Wuji had a smile which made anyone who saw him instantly feel well-disposed towards him. He immediately said, “If you were the only one here, Baiwei, of course I would’ve just entered. But Brother Ji Ning is here as well; I didn’t wish to be discourteous.”

“Ji Ning, come, this is my good friend, Hun Wuji.” Baiwei said. “Young master Wuji.” Ning clasped his hands in salute. “Brother Ji Ning. I heard your name just now.” Hun Wuji clasped his hands in response. “Then you heard me being made a fool out of.” Baiwei felt resigned.

“Just now, shortly after I sat down nearby, I heard what was going on between you, Baiwei, and with Fox.” Wuji sat down as he spoke.

“Northmont Fox truly is a fool. How many schools does Stillwater Commandery have? He has a bit of a relationship with the Skysplitter Sword Sect and might be able to prevent Brother Ji Ning from entering that sect, but what about the other sects? For a school, accepting new disciples is a major matter. There are so many schools in Stillwater Commandery that are seeking new disciples, and he’s only able to affect a few of them. In the end, Brother Ji Ning is still going to be able to enter a school.”

“Thus, as you said, he is a fool. He always jumps at any opportunity to make trouble for me.” Baiwei shook his head. “It is as though by doing so,

he can demonstrate superiority over me.”

Suddenly, the extravagant music from outside changed. The sound of a zither suddenly rang out. The gentle, watery strumming sounds were soul-stirring to the extreme.

“Eh?” Ning, Baiwei, and Wuji all looked towards the outside. Ning stared down into the wide hall. He immediately saw a green-clothed woman who was seated in front of a zither, plucking at its strings. For a moment, the entire hall seemed to have grown quiet. Only the sound of the zither could be heard.

Such a beautiful zither song.

Such a beautiful person.

Ning, upon seeing the green-clothed woman, instantly felt that she must be one of the fairy maidens of legend. The sound of her zither made Ning’s soul feel incomparably comfortable. Her skill in the Dao of the zither had clearly reached a level of mastery.

After the song was finished, the hall remained quiet for quite some time.

“So it’s actually Zither Fairy.” Baiwei sighed in praise as he spoke, then instructed the servant waiting outside, “Go, have Zither Fairy come over.” “Yes.” The attendant outside replied.

“You are actually going to invite Zither Fairy to come accompany us? The price you will pay won’t be a light one.” Hun Wuji glanced towards Baiwei in surprise, but Baiwei simply said, “Earlier, because of me, Brother Ji Ning’s chance to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect was ruined. I wish to make sure that Brother Ji Ning will be happy today.”

Ning was quite surprised as well. He was inviting Zither Fairy over, just for him? And from the sound of it, the price would be significant. “Brother Baiwei, you truly are too courteous,” Ning said hurriedly. “That was just a minor matter, not worthy of discussing.”

“Hahahaha...” That deep voice rang out yet again. “Zither Fairy’s skill in the zither is truly at an incomparably miraculous level. Zither Fairy, would you be willing to accept an invitation to come to the room of myself,

Northmont Fox?” This voice echoed throughout the hall.

Within Ning’s room. Bang! Baiwei, in his anger, smashed his beaskull goblet against the ground. Grinding his teeth, he said, “What sort of an unlucky day is this? I’m stepping in dogshit repeatedly.”

Chapter 7: Treasure Auction

Within the hall.

Per Northmont Baiwei's orders, the maidservant outside had exited the corridor and had arrived within the main hall. Upon hearing the words, 'Zither Fairy, would you be willing to accept an invitation to come to the room of myself, Northmont Fox', she couldn't help but be stunned. She hurriedly called out, "Mistress, young master Northmont Baiwei also wishes for Zither Fairy to go to him."

Miss Ziyi, next to Zither Fairy, was stunned upon hearing this. Moments later, she laughed. "Young master Fox, young master Baiwei is also inviting Zither Fairy to pay a visit," Miss Ziyi called out.

"Haha, Northmont Baiwei, you are also going to invite Zither Fairy?" That deep voice instantly grew smug. "Why were you so quiet and silent about it? I didn't hear you say a thing. If you are going to invite someone over, you have to show some sincerity."

"How could I be as boorish and uncouth as you?" Northmont Baiwei replied with a cold laugh. The two were in different rooms, and were both calling out to each other.

Within the other rooms were young masters of major tribes, superb figures of major clans, and Raindragon Guards. Still, they didn't intervene, just watched with amusement. After all, Northmont Baiwei and Fox were both highly ranked young masters of the entire Stillwater Commandery. They were both descendants of the Northmont clan, and their parents, Northmont Blacktiger and Northmont Yin, were truly incredible figures. They didn't dare to rashly intervene in a struggle between two such young masters. After all, in Stillwater Commandery, the Northmont clan was the strongest power.

"Northmont Fox?" Ning looked through the window, towards the direction of that voice. Ning could see a figure in a private room that was a few kilometers away. Northmont Fox appeared quite muscular, and he had sideburns on his face. His appearance was very different from his name.

He had the frame and musculature of a dominating tyrant, but his eyes were cold, sinister, and arrogant, like those of a viper's.

Northmont Baiwei appeared ardent and heroic. Northmont Fox, however, appeared cold and sinister. They were two diametrically different people.

"Miss Ziyi." Northmont Fox called out in his loud voice, "This Northmont Baiwei hasn't reserved Zither Fairy in advance, has he?" "He has not." Miss Ziyi, standing on the ground below, shook her head. "Since there is no reservation, and since both myself and Northmont Baiwei are both inviting Zither Fairy over, let this be determined by who offers the highest price." Northmont Fox's voice echoed throughout the entire hall as he called out, "I'll offer ten taels." Instantly, every single private room within the giant hall became filled with lowered whispers.

Within Ning's room.

Ning was puzzled. Ten taels? Ten taels of what? As for Northmont Baiwei, he said with cold fury, "I'll offer fifty." "Hahaha, Northmont Baiwei, you are going to compete against me? Are you able to win?" Northmont Fox called out from his distant room, with a voice filled with braggado, "I'll offer a hundred."

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Within Ning's room. Ning, Wuji, and Baiwei were all seated. Wuji lowered his voice and said, "Brother Baiwei, if we are going to get into a bidding war, I can assist you." But Northmont Baiwei just laughed and said, "No need. In terms of wealth, how could Northmont Fox compare with you, you little God of Wealth? Inviting Zither Fairy over is only a minor matter. Normally, just 'one' is enough. To spend too much is just foolishness. He's now offered a hundred; as long as I raise the price again, Northmont Fox definitely won't make another counter-offer. By then, I'd have to suffer the consequences."

"Why aren't I hearing anything from you?" Northmont Fox mocked from far away. Northmont Baiwei called back, "Congratulations, Northmont Fox. You have invited Zither Fairy to accompany you for the price of a

hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence.”

Liquefied elemental essence? Ning was stunned upon hearing this. So the ‘one’, ‘ten’, and ‘hundred’ taels they were referring to...were in reference to liquefied elemental essence! Liquefied elemental essence was the refined, concentrated version of natural, elemental energy. One could rely on it to engage in training, without causing any stress to the body. Previously, Ning had acquired a a very thin layer of liquefied elemental essence from the stone room in the mine, most likely just ten or fifteen kilograms worth.

He had used up only a third of the essence, less than five kilograms. This had allowed him to breakthrough to the Zifu Disciple level and also establish and stabilize as an early-stage Zifu Disciple.

“Ten or fifteen kilograms was comparable to the entire wealth of the Ji clan,” Ning mused to himself. “A hundred taels of it...that’s roughly equivalent to five kilograms. Just now, in order to have Zither Fairy accompany him, Northmont Fox casually tossed out a sum that is equivalent to half the total wealth of my Ji clan? He is too...too insane.”

“A hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence.” Hun Wuji nodded. “That’s roughly equivalent to an Earth-ranked magic treasure. Given Northmont Fox’s temperament...for him to throw away an Earth-ranked magic treasure for the sake of making trouble for you is his limit.”

Ning, hearing this, was speechless. Well, then. After killing Adept Xu Li, he had only acquired three Earth-ranked magic treasures. He had worked so hard to accumulate that amount of wealth...but compared to exalted young masters of the Marquisate of Stillwater, he was indeed quite far off.

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Outside the room, Northmont Fox’s voice continued to ring out with arrogance and smugness as Miss Ziyi was introducing Zither Fairy to him.

Within Northmont Fox’s room. Northmont Fox was currently seated alongside three other men. As for their servants and followers, they had a separate room of their own.

“I didn’t expect that I would run into Northmont Baiwei here, today.” Northmont Fox held a beaskull goblet in his hand, his red tongue gently lapping at the wine as he laughed sinisterly. “I just so happened to acquire a powerful retainer recently, as well as an extremely rare magic treasure. What happened just now was just the starter course. Today, I’m going to anger him so badly that he vomits blood. I’ll make it so that he will never forget this day. I’ll make him feel terror in his heart whenever he sees me!”

“Then let us congratulate you in advance, young master Fox.” “Let’s watch as Northmont Baiwei is embarrassed.” The other three in the room, Zhou Li included, all cupped their hands in a salute.

“Hahaha.” Northmont Fox laughed joyfully. Right at this moment, Zither Fairy came in, and Fox immediately said, “Come, Zither Fairy, come. Please come in and sit.” “Thank you, young master Fox.” Zither Fairy’s gentle laugh made Fox feel as though even his bones had relaxed. This made him feel all the more pleased.

With a beautiful woman accompanying them, Northmont Fox’s room was filled with laughter and amusement.

A long time later.

“Mm.” Northmont Fox looked down at the main hall, and at the dais that was beginning to be set up. “It should almost be time for the treasure auction.” Fox waved his hand, and a grand seal suddenly appeared within it. He handed it to the nearby Zither Fairy and said, “Zither Fairy, this grand seal is a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure, ‘Grand Mountain Seal’. It was forged from an actual mountain, the ‘Grand Mountain’, which was refined into this seal. Its true value comes from the fact that it is merely a Mortal-ranked magic treasure, but in terms of power, it isn’t inferior to any ordinary Earth-ranked magic treasures. Thus, this Grand Mountain Seal is absolutely a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure.”

“Top-grade Mortal-ranked?” “It is extremely rare to find a top-grade magic treasure. Young master Fox actually has a treasure like this?” Everyone nearby, Zhou Li included, was surprised. Zifu Disciples were

capable of using Mortal-ranked magic treasures, while Wanxiang Adepts were able to use Earth-ranked magic treasures. But generally speaking, they only used low-grade or middle-grade treasures. It was extremely rare for someone to be in possession of a high-grade Earth-ranked magic treasure. As for top-grade...that was incomparably rare.

“I’ll deliver it over now.” Zither Fairy rose to her feet.

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The dais rose up within the main hall below. Miss Ziyi’s voice echoed throughout the entire hall: “It is now time for the treasure auction. Today, our Carefree Caverns has prepared eighteen treasures, each with extraordinary attributes. Anyone willing to purchase them can buy them. The high bidder wins the auction!”

Within Ning’s room. Ning, upon hearing this, couldn’t help but feel startled. Wasn’t this identical to auctions on Earth? So a place like this, where Immortals and Devils gathered, also had so-called ‘treasure auctions’.

“In addition, honored guests, if you have any precious treasures which you are willing to sell, you can bring them out as well and allow everyone to bid on them as well,” Miss Ziyi said with a laugh. “Just now, young master Northmont Fox has brought out a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure, ‘Grand Mountain Seal’, and has made it the nineteenth magic treasure up for bidding in our treasure auction.”

“Northmont Baiwei! I wonder what sort of treasures you might have for sale?” That deep voice echoed out once more.

This was a slap in the face. He was directly striking Baiwei on the face! Within his room, Baiwei had an extremely ugly look on his face. Hun Wuji was frowning as well. “This Northmont Fox actually managed to procure a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure. Things are now a bit troublesome. I can bring out quite a few Earth-ranked magic treasures, but in terms of rarity, they can’t compare with this Grand Mountain Seal.”

Ning could tell what was going on. For these young masters, when they competed in treasures, what they cared the most about was rarity!

Although Earth-ranked magic treasures were much more expensive, in terms of rarity and uniqueness, they were far inferior.

“Dogshit luck. I truly stepped into dogshit today.” Baiwei gritted his teeth. “I didn’t expect that not only would I run into this fellow, he actually came prepared. I’ll have to endure. Next time, I will get him back.”

“Brother Baiwei,” Ning said, “I also happen to have a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure.” “Oh?” Baiwei and Wuji both looked towards Ning in surprise. A top-grade Mortal-ranked treasure wasn’t something you could simply buy with money; the reason why they were ranked top-grade was because they were truly few in number.

“Please take a look.” Ning waved his hand, and the dragon pearl appeared within it, along with four dragon scales. The dragon pearl had the illusory dragon swimming about in the middle of it.

“A dragon pearl!” Baiwei and Wuji were all startled. Wuji then cried out in astonishment, “A four-sided formations that matches with a dragon pearl? Judging from how complex the formation is...this is inconceivable. What formation is this?”

“Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation!” Ning gave his response.

“Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation?” Northmont Baiwei said in astonishment, “Our Northmont clan has a grand formation called the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, but that is a Heaven-ranked grand formation, and an extremely powerful Heaven-ranked grand formation at that. So there is actually a Mortal-ranked version of the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation as well? It was actually simplified? This truly is unbelievable.”

Wuji quickly said, “Such a grand formation...this is far rarer than what Fox has brought out. In addition, Fox just brought a single grand seal. What you have here, Brother Ji Ning, is a formation! It is far more valuable.” The value of a formation was, indeed, higher than that of other magic treasures of the same level.

The way in which Hun Wuji looked at Ning had changed. Top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasures weren’t so easily procured. It seemed as

though this friend of Baiwei's, Ji Ning, was quite extraordinary as well.

"Ji Ning, are you truly willing to sell it? A treasure like this...after selling it, it will be hard for you to regain it," Baiwei said. "Yes, sell it." Ning laughed.

The Ji clan now had the protection of the Marquis of Stillwater; naturally, it no longer had any need for the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation. In addition, a grand formation like this one required five people controlling it in order to unleash its full combat power. The reason Ning had brought this formation to Stillwater City was because he planned to sell it, and thus acquire a large amount of Mortal-ranked flying swords, which would vastly increase the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

"Alright. Brother Ji Ning, I'm not going to waste too many words on effusive thanks. This time, I'm going to give Northmont Fox a good slap across the face." Baiwei's own face was turning ruddy with excitement.

"Northmont Baiwei, can it be that you, the young master of Northmont Blacktiger's estate, don't have any treasures?" That deep voice once more rang out mockingly. Baiwei laughed softly, then called out in a loud voice, "Miss Ziyi, I have a formation here. Although it is quite ordinary, it is still naturally far superior to what Northmont Fox produced."

The atmosphere in the hall instantly changed slightly. Everyone understood that young master Northmont Baiwei was finally standing up and preparing to deliver a vicious slap to his opponent's face.

Only, would his slap be a loud, ringing one?

That would depend on whether or not this formation treasure was superior to the Grand Mountain Seal.

Chapter 8: The Boy of Universal Fire

The treasure auction had begun, amidst this strange atmosphere. One treasure after another was brought out.

“The first treasure.” Miss Ziyi held up a tri-colored stone, which then levitated into the air. “14.5 kilograms of ‘Flame Flint’ which can be used to forge magic treasures. The lowest bid must be at least 130 taels of liquefied elemental essence!”

“150 taels of liquefied elemental essence.” Wuji was the first to speak out. The other guests in the various rooms looked towards Wuji, and all of them called out warmly, “Oh, young master Wuji is present as well?” “Young master Wuji!” They all addressed him in a clearly warm and familiar manner.

“160 taels.” A clear voice rang out from a distant room. It was a rainbow-clothed maiden. “180 taels.” An icy voice from a grim, callous-looking youth.

Within Ning’s private room. Ning just sat there, listening to these people bargain. He glanced backwards towards Hun Wuji. “Brother Wuji, you aren’t going to bid any further?”

“Brother Ji Ning, this is your first time here so you don’t understand.” Wuji laughed as he explained, “The small-scale treasure auctions which the Carefree Caverns normally offer will have treasures that start off at a price which is quite a bit lower than its true value. I offered 150 taels, and that’s a price at which I can definitely make money off this transaction. But as for a price of 200 taels, that’s a bit too much; only those who truly need it would raise it to such a price. I’m a merchant; I don’t like doing business at a loss.”

Ning now understood. So the first bid Wuji had made was for the sake of earning money.

“Ji Ning, after you grow more familiar with Wuji, you’ll understand; this young God of Wealth is always thinking about how to make more money,” Northmont Baiwei said with a laugh.

“290 taels.” A hoarse voice suddenly rang out.

A long silence. “Anyone offering a higher bid?” Miss Ziyi glanced at the private rooms in every direction. “Since there are no other bids, then this Flame Flint will go to young master Qu of the Raindragon Guard.”

“Next is the second treasure...” Miss Ziyi quickly began to introduce the next treasure to the audience.

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“Young master Qu is a disciple of the Trueflower School as well as a Raindragon Guard.” Baiwei gave a quick introduction regarding the man. “He is already a peak Wanxiang Adept, and his future prospects are unlimited. Upon becoming a Primal Daoist, he will truly become a major figure here.”

Ning nodded. The others within this hall might not have statuses as exalted as that of Northmont Baiwei or Northmont Fox, but they were all extraordinary figures who were able to converse and interact with Baiwei and Fox as equals. After all, although these two young masters of the Northmont clan had exalted statuses, they were still young and didn’t truly command great power yet.

The reason why the Carefree Caverns treated them so respectfully was because behind the two of them were Northmont Blacktiger and Northmont Yin, who were candidates to become the next Marquis of Stillwater.

“That person just now was Miss Leshan of the Meng clan,” Baiwei said. “Within the Meng clan, she is viewed with great favor. Her training speed has been extremely fast, and in sixty short years, she has become a peak Wanxiang Adept. The Meng clan is one of the major clans within our Stillwater Commandery.”

Ning nodded. The Meng clan? He glanced at the distant maiden, who appeared to only be twelve or thirteen years of age. She was one of the true, proud scions of the Meng clan. Compared to her, Meng Jun, Roch, and Xin were far inferior.

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One treasure after another was sold off, most of which were meant for Wanxiang Adepts to use. Although occasionally, there were some appropriate for Zifu Disciples, those were all extremely rare items. Of the people present, aside from Baiwei, Fox, and some other young masters with extraordinary backgrounds, most had already reached the Wanxiang Adept level.

“Of the items that our Carefree Caverns prepared, two were not bid on, while the other sixteen have all been sold. Now, the auction for the top-grade Mortal-ranked ‘Grand Mountain Seal’ of young master Northmont Fox will begin. This treasure is a grand seal that was forged from the peak of Grand Mountain. If it was an Earth-ranked magic treasure, it wouldn’t be particularly precious; its value lies in the fact that it is a Mortal-ranked magic treasure which can be used by Zifu Disciples. When a peak Zifu Disciple uses this treasure, it can transform back into its original form of the Grand Mountain and crush downwards with astonishing force. There is no minimum price; everyone can now commence bidding on the treasure.”

Miss Ziyi was laughing as she spoke. The treasures which guests occasionally brought and auction off always started off at a minimum price of zero. The amount that was bid would be the amount the guest would receive; the Carefree Caverns never asked for any commission at all.

Within Ning’s private room. “I wonder how much this Grand Mountain Seal is worth?” Ning mused to himself. After having visited the Treasure Hall of the underwater estate, Ning didn’t hold the Grand Mountain Seal in high regard. If it had been left in the Treasure Hall, the first master probably would’ve just classified as something which only barely qualified as a high-grade Mortal-ranked treasure.

“Eighty to a hundred taels of liquefied elemental essences,” Wuji said. “This is the most common of all grand seal-type magic treasures. Although it is top-grade, it isn’t all that precious; it can just barely reach the price of a normal Earth-ranked magic treasure.”

“Fifty taels.”

“Fifty five taels.”

“Sixty taels.”

The various rooms were all making their bids. Soon, a final price was reached; 110 taels of liquefied elemental essence. Ning stared through the window towards the distant Northmont Fox, who had a smile on his face. Clearly, he was pleased with this price.

“Next is a formation technique, one offered by young master Northmont Baiwei,” Miss Ziyi called out loudly, a look of joy on her face. “The Marquisate of Stillwater has a famous Heaven-ranked formation, the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation. As for this formation, this is the simplified version of that ancient, mighty formation. Although it is simplified, our Carefree Caverns have ascertained that it was simplified in a nearly perfect way; it is at the utmost peak of Mortal-ranked magic treasures, a top-grade amongst top-grades.”

In front of Miss Ziyi, a dragon pearl and four dragon scales suddenly emerged, hovering before her. Everyone present had extraordinary eyesight, and as they stared towards these items, astonishment appeared on quite a few faces.

“Ziyi!” Northmont Fox had an extremely ugly look on his face. He barked out, “I’ve never heard of there being such a thing as a simplified Mortal-rank version of the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation. Are you sure you assessed it correct?”

Miss Ziyi just replied in a loud voice, “Our Carefree Caverns is willing to pay two hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence to purchase this grand formation.” Upon these words coming out, Fox’s face instantly blackened, and he no longer said a single word. The reputation of the Carefree Caverns was beyond reproach; if the Carefree Caverns was willing to make an offer, that meant that it had an extremely good opinion of this formation technique.

“I am willing to offer 210 taels.”

“230 taels.”

Right away, the price began to rise. In his own room, Ning felt his heartrate begin to quicken; this was his treasure, after all. Slowly, the price continued to tick upwards....

“360 taels!” Suddenly, the clear voice of a young child rang out. Instantly, everything fell silent.

First of all, the price had risen very slowly to 300 taels, and this had been viewed as a hard ceiling to break through. For someone to suddenly increase the price to 360 taels was surprising. And secondly, the person who had made the bid had the voice of a child...this caused quite a few people to look towards him. Even Ning couldn't resist from turning to look. He saw that in a distant, private room, there was a child that appeared to be six or seven years of age. He had a golden necklace around his neck, and he was nibbling on a bone.

“The Boy of Universal Fire?” Baiwei was surprised. “He came today as well?” Wuji was also shocked. As for Ning, he narrowed his eyes. ‘Boy’? This was the first time he had encountered an Immortal practitioner who looked like a child.

“Brother Ji Ning, according to stories, this Boy of Universal Fire is a reincarnated Immortal,” Baiwei said in a soft voice. “He is one of the most indisputable masters of formations, and he stands at the very top of the field amongst those of us in the younger generation. He has trained for less than thirty years, but he is already a peak Wanxiang Adept. In addition, he primarily focuses his efforts on analyzing formations, and has only spent a bit of effort on training. And yet, he has already reached such a level.”

Less than thirty years of age? A peak Wanxiang Adept? Who only spent a small part of his attention on training? And was a reincarnated Immortal? Ning was truly speechless.

“Are there any higher prices?” Miss Ziyi looked towards the surrounding rooms, but unfortunately, there were no further bids. “Then this Netherworm Heavenlock Formation will go to the young master of

Universal Fire,” Miss Ziyi said in an extremely respectful manner.

The Boy of Universal Fire, gnawing on his bone, instantly began to laugh loudly. “To condense such a complicated grand formation in such a manner, yet maintain so much of its essence...it has been a long time since I’ve seen something like this. I truly am curious as to which formations master carried this out. I bought it for just a bit over three hundred taels... what a bargain, what a bargain!” The Boy of Universal Fire waved his hand, and the dragon pearl, along with the four dragon scales, flew straight towards him. At the same time, he also tossed out some black marks, sending them flying towards Miss Ziyi.

As soon as the dragon pearl and the dragon scales entered his grasp, the Boy of Universal Fire instantly began to peruse them. The distant Ning, upon seeing this, sighed to himself. Even though this person was a reincarnated Immortal, he was also insanely dedicated to what he did. If he wasn’t, could he have reached his current level of accomplishments?

“Hmph.” In the other room, Northmont Fox had an increasingly ugly look on his face. He had lost. His Grand Mountain Seal had only sold for 110 taels, while the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation had sold for 360 taels.

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Within Ning’s room. An attendant brought in a stack of black marks, placing them on the table. The attendant then bowed respectfully and left, closing the door as he did.

“This is 360 taels,” Baiwei said, delivering the stack of black marks to Ning. Ning saw that there were three slightly larger marks and six slightly smaller marks. On the large marks, there were the words, ‘Heavenly Treasures Mountain of the Darcian Dynasty’ and ‘Exchangeable For 100 Taels’. On the small marks, there were the words, ‘Heavenly Treasures Mountain of the Darcian Dynasty’ and ‘Exchangeable For 10 Taels’.

“Every single commandery city controlled by every single Marquisate of the world has a Heavenly Treasures Mountain within,” Baiwei explained. “This elemental mark is used quite commonly. It is also a magic treasure

that requires someone to be at least at the Xiantian level to bind. After binding it, you can carry it with you and use it to buy other magic treasures, or trade for liquefied elemental essence. Liquefied elemental essence is something which every single major power in the entire world delights in.”

Ning nodded. At Earth, one of the trillion Lesser Worlds, it could be said that gold was a common commodity used for trade. In this vast world, however, the refined extract of the natural elemental energy of the world was what was used as a common currency. By relying on them, one could avoid having to waste precious amounts of time in slowly, bitterly gathering in energy. However, not even Immortals could be wealthy enough to use liquefied elemental essence nonstop; at most, they would use them to help in making breakthroughs.

“I’ve caused you, Brother Ji Ning, to lose a grand formation. I truly feel ashamed,” Baiwei said quickly. “But I acquired this liquefied elemental essence,” Ning replied hurriedly. “As for the grand formation, it was of no use to me.”

Baiwei shook his head. “It’s not the same. Such a rare formation can easily be exchanged for liquefied elemental essence, but it will be very hard for you to use elemental essence to buy another such formation. Still, I have to admit, this feels excellent. Today, Northmont Fox wanted to cause trouble for me. He first ruined our plans of having you, Brother Ji Ning, enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect, and then he insisted on taking away Zither Fairy. At last, I’ve given vent to my anger.”

“Given Northmont Fox’s temperament, I imagine that he’s going wild with rage by now,” Wuji said with a laugh. “Right.” Just thinking of this made Baiwei begin to laugh even more happily.

Ning grinned as well...and in his heart, he was calculating how many flying swords he might be able to purchase with these 360 taels of liquefied elemental essence.

“When I left Swallow Mountain, I first made a trip to the underwater estate. I passed the second level of the Wargod Hall and traded for the

Nine Yang Swords Formation.” Ning was pondering to himself. The Nine Yang Swords Formation was an extremely good match for the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]; although Daoist Threelives had individually ranked those nine swords as only being high-grade, in the modern era, they would all definitely be considered top-grade. In addition, all nine swords came from the same source, and they just so happened to form a formation base for the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and so the power of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] had naturally increased significantly.

“I need to acquire some more high quality flying swords that come from the same source. I can’t hope for top-grade Mortal-ranked flying swords like these Nine Yang Swords, but I have to try and procure high-grade or at least middle-grade swords.” Ning understood that there was a direct link between the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] and the quality of his magic treasures. The higher quality those magic treasures were, the greater the power of the formation would naturally become.

Given the current power of his divine sense, his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] would be capable of unleashing tremendous combat power. His true killer attack, the [Starseizing Hand], was something he would only use at the most critical moments; under ordinary circumstances, he would rely on the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to make his way through the world.

Chapter 9: Ji Ning Reveals His Fierceness

After having vented their anger through the treasure auction, Northmont Baiwei, Hun Wuji, and Ji Ning were now chatting and laughing amongst themselves. They were in quite a good mood. Time passed on slowly, and night began to approach.

“Midnight comes, and the time for the betting arena comes as well.” From outside the window, the voice of Miss Ziyi could be heard. Ning looked out through the window, only to see that the hall had now become completely empty. There were two jewels placed in a corner of the room, and Miss Ziyi was standing in one of the corners while speaking.

“The betting arena duels are absolutely berserk,” Baiwei said as he looked out the window. “Most of the people here are Wanxiang Adepts, and astonishingly talented ones at that. They will send some of their Zifu Disciple followers or retainers to engage in battle against other Zifu Disciples and Zifu-level Greater Monsters. The masters on each side will engage in a gamble on the duel.” Ning sighed to himself as he listened. What a tragic sight!

“The Immortal cultivators and monsters who engage in the betting arena duels participate for the sake of survival or for the sake of acquiring treasures,” Baiwei said. “However, a duel must be between two competitors at the same level; there absolutely would never be, for example, a Wanxiang Adept battling a Zifu Disciple.”

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Ning stared down at the hall below. An Immortal practitioner with a sword on his back had entered the hall, and a red-haired man had entered as well. The two stared at each other, their eyes filled with murderous intents.

They first walked to stand before the two jewels at the two opposite corners of the hall, filling them with their elemental energy and causing each to radiate light.

“The Immortal cultivator under the command of young master Qu is a

peak Zifu Disciple.”

“The Greater Monster under the command of Miss Leshan is also at the peak Zifu level.”

Miss Ziyi called out in a loud voice, “Activate the grand sealing formation.” Whoosh! Instantly, a watery, rippling layer of light that was nearly a kilometer in circumference suddenly appeared within the hall, covering the Immortal practitioner and the red-haired man within it.

“Qu Yihang, I think you had best admit defeat obediently. Otherwise, not only will you lose your money, you will also lose your man!”

“Hmph. Just wait and you’ll see.”

Voices rang out from the two private rooms...and the battle below them instantly began. The red-haired Greater Monster instantly transformed into a strange, four-hooved monster of fire. Its body was covered with armored scales, and it howled as it charged towards the Immortal practitioner while belching forth fiery light from its mouth.

“Vermin, accept death.” The sword-wielding Immortal practitioner let out a cold laugh. Swish! The sword on his back instantly flew out, and as it slashed through the air, it left a rainbow-colored scar through the air...

Ning watched the battle progress beneath him. He nodded to himself. “The Immortal practitioner should be the winner.” After having battled for some time, the Greater Monster let out a grief-stricken bellow, then collapsed. The Immortal practitioner’s face was ashen as well; he had been forced to execute a forbidden technique in order to achieve this victory. However, in the end, he had won. Previously, his master-uncle, Qu Yihang had told him that so long as he won, he would help him become an inner disciple.

“Success.” The Immortal practitioner had excitement in his eyes. Although he had used a forbidden technique, he hadn’t used it for very long. In a year or so, he would be fully recovered.

“Hahaha....” Young master Qu immediately began to laugh. As for Meng Leshan, she had an ugly look on her face.

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In Ning's private room. Baiwei said with a laugh, "Meng Leshan and Qu Yihang are both dazzling, outstanding talents. Both of them have joined the Raindragon Guard as well. Rumor said that while on a mission for the Raindragon Guard, the two formed a grudge against each other. Outside Stillwater City, the two would most likely be plotting each other's deaths. Within the city itself, they are still going all out to harm each other."

"Much like you and Northmont Fox, actually," Wuji said with a laugh. "Hahaha, yes, just like me and Northmont Fox," Baiwei replied with a loud laugh.

Wuji looked towards Ning. "Brother Ji Ning, although these betting duels appear casual, in truth, many mysteries hide within. You have to select a particularly astonishing individual at the Zifu Disciple level...but the more talented an expert is, the less willing they will be to risk their lives. Thus, it's actually quite difficult to arrange for these betting duels. Both sides have to come up with a way to recruit someone, and if they lose, not only will they lose money and their fighter, they will also lose face. Sometimes, if they grow desperate due to their losses, they might even personally join the field of battle."

"Personally join the field of battle?" Ning was surprised. These Immortal practitioners all had extraordinary statuses; they would personally join and fight?

"What's so surprising about this? These geniuses rose to prominence through combat to begin with. When enraged, they will personally join the field of battle. Every year or two, there will be Wanxiang Adepts, unparalleled geniuses all, who will fight a duel to the death here in the Carefree Caverns. If someone dies, no one can be blamed for it!" Baiwei continued, "But of course, aside from those who have grudges against each other, most are just trying to win some money through using the servants and retainers under their command."

"For example, myself," Wuji said with a laugh. "I have quite a few servants and retainers. I can send them down to engage in betting duels,

and the stakes for each duel must be at least two hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence. I can make quite a bit of money in this manner.” Ning nodded.

Ning now understood that although Hun Wuji and Northmont Baiwei were two of the more amiable figures amongst these exalted young masters...they were still figures of high status. They had high standards. It was precisely because they thought well of Ning that they were willing to treat him as an equal and as a friend. To them, ordinary Zifu Disciples were nothing more than retainers or servants; why would they care about their deaths?

Some time later. More than ten betting duels had already been carried out, and the atmosphere of the entire hall had become noticeably more heated and wild. There was currently a very tall and muscular Fiendgod Body Refiner standing in the middle of the hall. As a Zifu-level Fiendgod Body Refiner with a divine ability, he possessed astonishing combat power.

“Hahaha, everyone, I’ve won six rounds in a row. It seems that the ‘spiritfruit wine’ for today’s betting duels will be mine for the drinking.” A chubby-faced, big-eared youth in a private room was laughing merrily. “Is there anyone else? As long as you can beat my subordinate, you will gain three hundred taels.”

“Su-Su! You’ve won enough. Have your man go down.” A deep voice rang out. Instantly, Ning turned to look; the speaker was Northmont Fox. Fox flashed a fierce glance towards Ning, giving him a long stare, then grinning with a clearly wicked idea in mind.

Ning laughed as well. He had overheard quite a few things today, and now understood that these young masters couldn’t quite be considered the movers-and-shakers of the Commandery. The truly top-tier figures of Stillwater Commandery were the likes of Northmont Blacktiger. Northmont Fox? Ning didn’t fear him at all.

“Bang!” The hall suddenly trembled. A two-meter tall horned man with massive muscles and azure skin strode into the hall, his every footstep

causing it to shake. His eyes radiated with azure light as well. Upon seeing him, every single person understood...that this was a Greater Monster! Normal people could rarely reach the height of six meters, much less be horned.

The giant, muscular, horned Greater Monster strode to the two jewels in the corner, then filled them with his elemental ki and his divine power. "Fiendgod Body Refiner, Ki Refiner. A dual refiner." Miss Ziyi, standing in the corner, immediately made this report. "Both are at the peak Zifu level. A Greater Monster under the control of young master Fox."

Whoosh. The grand sealing formation once more lit up, and the Greater Monster stared directly towards that Fiendgod Body Refiner cultivator. "Die, then." The azure-skinned, horned Greater Monster let out a loud roar, transforming into a rhinoceros with a single horn that was more than thirty meters tall. Its entire body then radiated with light, and the body of the Monoceros once more swelled, transforming to sixty meters in height. The enormous Monoceros...it stared at its opponent as though he were an ant.

Bang! The Monoceros moved as fast as lightning, intending to trample its opponent. Whap! Whap! Whap! After three exchanges of blows, the Fiendgod cultivator had been trampled to the point of having only half his body left. He immediately called out in a high voice, "I admit defeat!" Only then did the azure-skinned Monoceros come to a halt.

If one side perished or admitted defeat, that represented the end of the battle! If one insisted on forcibly killing someone who had surrendered, one would be punished with a fine equal to ten times the stakes of the bet.

"Grrr..." The Monoceros raised its head, letting out a growl, then transformed into mist before recondensing into that azure-skinned, horned man who was six meters tall.

"Northmont Baiwei. Three hundred taels. Dare you engage in a betting duel with me?" The distant Northmont Fox pointed from his window towards Baiwei. "I know that you are as cowardly as a mouse, and won't possibly dare to engage in a betting duel. Hahaha...as cowardly as a rat!"

The sound of his laughter was so repugnant and vile. Ning now finally understood why some people would personally go enter the arena.

“I didn’t expect that Northmont Fox would be here today. If I did...I would never have allowed him to act so arrogantly for so long.” Baiwei gritted his teeth, so hard that they were at the point of splintering. He was an incomparably proud person; how could he not be enraged after being mocked repeatedly?

“Brother Wuji, do you have any powerful retainers present?” Baiwei looked towards Wuji. Wuji was like a young God of Wealth; he often relied on betting duels to earn money. Naturally, he had some formidable retainers under his command. Nodding, he said, “I do have a powerful retainer amongst the servants I brought today. However, I truly do not feel confident in his chances. That Greater Monster retainer which Northmont Fox brought out is a Fiendgod Body Refiner with a divine ability; he truly is extraordinary.”

Ning nodded as well. Monsters were powerful to begin with, and those who trained as Fiendgod Body Refiners were even tougher to deal with, much less those who also had divine abilities. Their combat power was at a level higher than even Jadechild had been at. Generally speaking, those with such a great level of power would disdain from serving as retainers and engaging in betting duels. However, this person was a Greater Monster who had definitely been captured and tamed; thus, he must have been forced to obey the order to go take part in a betting duel.

“No matter what, let’s give it a try,” Baiwei said. “Alright,” Wuji nodded. “Attend me.” Baiwei called towards the servant outside, then waved his hand and produced three hundred taels worth of marks, then tossed them over. “Let’s bet on a duel.” The servant nodded.

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Soon, a black-robed cultivator entered the hall. He stared coldly towards his opponent, underwent the test, and was verified to also be at the peak Zifu level in power. “Kill him!” From far away, Northmont Fox let out a roar.

That six-meter tall, azure-skinned and horned man stared at the black-robed cultivator, then roared, "You are dead." And then, it once more transformed into a towering, massive Monoceros, then executed its Heavenly Transformation divine ability and increased in size yet again, to sixty meters in height! Its entire body filled the area with a savage aura, causing the corners of the eyes of the black-robed cultivator to crease.

"A stupid cow." The black-robed cultivator let out a cold laugh. Whoosh! A black fog appeared out of nowhere in the area around them, filling the entire area, including that Monoceros. The only thing that could be seen within the black fog was an enormous, rainbow-colored serpentine phantom.

"Die, die, die!" The enormous Monoceros wildly charged and trampled about. The black fog swirled around it, and the massive phantom serpent also coiled around the Monoceros, causing its body to crackle and pop. Its body was beginning to rot, and its bones quickly became visible.

"Bangbangbang..." The Monoceros rampaged about, its power seemingly great enough to shatter the skies and overturn the mountains.

"No, I..." Suddenly, a miserable scream rang out. BANG! An explosive sound...and the black fog dispersed, along with the illusion of a serpent. The enormous Monoceros stood there in the hall, vestiges of blood and gore visible beneath its feet. Its body was completely rotted away, and thick white bones could be seen on its back. Still, quite soon, in just a few breaths, its body completely healed.

"Northmont Baiwei. Is that all you have to show?" Northmont Fox arrogantly mocked him yet again. "I'm so very sorry...but your three hundred taels of liquefied essence is now mine. I would now like to propose a challenge of six hundred taels of liquefied essence...dare you accept?"

Silence. Complete silence. The entire hall had fallen silent, and nobody said a thing. Although they weren't afraid of Northmont Fox, they truly didn't have any Zifu-level experts who were capable of battling that Monoceros monster. Everyone was waiting to see how Baiwei would

respond.

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Within Ning's private room. Baiwei stared towards the outside, his gaze narrowing. "Nine hundred taels! I'll wager nine hundred taels on a bet with you. Dare you accept it?" Northmont Fox was continuing to shout provocatively. He wanted to seize this opportunity to deeply humiliate his old foe. His father, Northmont Yin, strongly encouraged him to suppress Northmont Baiwei whenever Fox had the chance.

Silence.

Wuji didn't say anything. He didn't have any retainers who were more powerful than the monster. Baiwei's veins began to protrude from his face, and he muttered to himself, "Endure, endure, endure..."

"Let me go." Ning suddenly rose to his feet. "I will go kill that rhinoceros monster." "You?" Wuji and Baiwei both stared towards Ning in astonishment.

"No way. Ji Ning, if you train for a few more years, it will be simple for you to kill him, but you've only trained for ten or so years to date," Baiwei said, shaking his head hurriedly. "You can't take this risk." But in his heart, he couldn't help but feel slightly moved; he understood that Ning simply couldn't watch any longer, and wanted to fight on his behalf.

Ning glanced at the outside. Nine hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence? What he lacked the most right now was liquefied elemental essence; upon killing the rhinoceros monster, he should acquire quite a bit of it.

"Don't worry. Killing him?" Ning let out a chuckle. "That will be as easy as killing a chicken."

Wuji and Baiwei were both stunned. These words were simply too dominating!

"Fine. Then I'll bet against him. If we win, the liquefied elemental essence will be yours, Brother Ji Ning!" Northmont Baiwei felt incomparably excited.

Chapter 10: The Monstrous Ji Ning

“Brother Ji Ning, you are willing to risk yourself for me. I truly don’t know what I...” Northmont Baiwei looked at Ning, then said hesitatingly, “You know, let’s just forget it. Although Northmont Fox is going too far, it’s not a big deal if we just endure it for a time. In the future, I’ll just seek out an opportunity to avenge myself.” When he recollected how savage that rhinoceros Greater Monster was, Baiwei was worried for Ning.

“No need to say anything further. The liquefied essence will go to me upon winning, right? That’s enough,” Ning said with a laugh. Baiwei opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but nothing came out.

“Don’t worry. I’m completely confident.” Ning cracked his lips into a wide grin. “Excellent!” The nearby Hun Wuji looked at Ning. “Brother Ji Ning, we will wait here for you to drink with us when you return.” Ning nodded, a fierce light flashing through his eyes.

This time...would be the first time he would reveal his power in Stillwater City. Since he had come to Stillwater City, then it was time for him to truly show off what a ‘monstrous talent’ he was.

Since he had already decided to join a school, and since there were so many elite members from many schools present, Ning had come to his decision. He was no longer going to hide himself and conceal his power. He had trained in seclusion in the Swallow Mountain region for ten-plus years; he had concealed enough. In Stillwater City, what he needed was reveal as much of his prowess and talent as he could; he needed for the various schools to view him as a priceless treasure! To make the various powers all view him as someone tremendously important! Only then would he be able to ascend beyond the clouds in the azure sky!

If he was to embark on this path, then he would embark on this path as a genius. The path of a monstrous genius!

“A rhinoceros monster?” Ning looked through the window towards that savage, massive rhinoceros Greater Monster. “Nothing more than a stepping stone for me.”

“Attend me.” Baiwei once more summoned the servant, then handed over nine hundred taels. At the same time, he instructed her to take Ning to engage that Monoceros in a duel.

The maid looked in astonishment towards Ning. Within the hallway outside the room, she had seen for herself how savage and mighty that rhinoceros monster was. This delicate, handsome youth in front of her was going to battle against that rhinoceros monster?

“Yes.” The maidservant didn’t dare say anything; she immediately led Ning towards the outside. “Brother Ji Ning, we shall wait here for your victorious return!” Baiwei and Wuji both rose to their feet, watching as Ning left.

“Be careful.” The Whitewater Hound, resting on the ground, rose to his feet as well as he looked at Ning. Still, the Whitewater Hound knew very well...that Ning had killed Adept Xu Li with but a single stroke. Kill this rhinoceros monster? Ning shouldn’t have any problems at all.

Ning turned his head, glancing back towards him, then nodded. And then, Ning departed. Ning headed out through the hallway, following after the maidservant. There were some other attendants in the hallway as well. They all looked towards Ning, a mixture of curiosity, grief, sympathy, and pity in their eyes. As they saw it...this handsome, delicate youth was probably a retainer who was being sent to his certain death.

“Baiwei, are you quivering in fear?” That deep voice once more called out mockingly. “Northmont Fox, have that Greater Monster under your command prepare for death!” Another voice, a clear one, rang out from the other room. “In addition, Northmont Fox, let me tell you something. Even if you occasionally acquire a powerful retainer, you should be modest. The more arrogant you are, the more miserable your defeat will be!”

“Bullshit!” Northmont Fox instantly grew enraged. Northmont Baiwei just snickered. “Shortly afterwards, you’ll have to swallow your own pile of crap.” The voices of the two young masters of the Northmont clan echoed in the air.

As for Ning, he had already departed his corridor and arrived within the main hall.

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“Oh, Northmont Baiwei actually has a subordinate he can send out? Can it be that he feels confident that his subordinate will be able to overcome that rhinoceros monster?” A rainbow-clothed maiden looked downwards from her window.

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“Someone dares to battle against that rhinoceros monster? Who is it?” A white-robed young master looked downwards as well.

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“Hm.” The Boy of Universal Fire, still gnawing on that bone, looked downwards as well. Although he had earlier been focusing on analyzing his new formation, the betting duels was the most lively part of the night, and they didn’t go on for too long. Naturally, he elected to watch them as well.

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“Who is it? I refuse to believe that he has a subordinate that can kill my rhinoceros monster.” Northmont Fox stared downwards as well. All of them were staring towards that corridor, and soon, they all saw a youth dressed in fur enter the main hall, under the guidance of that maidservant. The youth had a smile on his face, as though this was naught but a game.

“He is Ji Ning.” Zhou Li, next to Fox, spoke out. “That good friend of Northmont Baiwei’s.” “Good friend?” Fox instantly began to roar with laughter, and his voice filled the entire hall.

“Northmont Baiwei, do you truly have no subordinates left? You actually asked your good friend to personally enter the fray? As I recall, this friend of yours wanted to join the Skysplitter Sword Sect. A young fellow who is just about to enter a sword sect...has actually come out to battle against this rhinoceros Greater Monster, who is in possession of a divine ability? He’s throwing his life away. I’m so very sorry, but it seems your 900 taels

will be mine, yet again.”

“You laugh quite loudly, but you’ll be crying soon enough,” Baiwei said with a cold laugh of his own, off in the distance.

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The formidable figures within the private rooms all stared down at Ji Ning. Upon hearing that Ning was Baiwei’s friend, they all mused to themselves that given Baiwei accepted him as a friend, he must certainly have some extraordinary attributes. Although he appeared to be a youth, the younger one appeared to be, the more one needed to be wary of that person.

“Please come.” Miss Ziyi looked at Ning. “This jewel is for testing your divine strength, while this one is for testing your elemental ki. Prior to the betting duel, you must have your basic level of power tested. It is absolutely forbidden for a Wanxiang Adept to battle against a Zifu Disciple, or something similar. If it does happen, then the Carefree Caverns will take the life of the cheater.”

Ning nodded. He immediately filled those two jewels with his Scarlet Shine divine power, as well as his elemental ki. The two jewels radiated with light which was far weaker than the previous opponents had generated. The light that emanated from the elemental ki test was particularly dim.

“Eh?” Miss Ziyi looked towards Ning in surprise, then called out in high voice, “The Immortal practitioner who Northmont Baiwei has sent out is a dual refiner, both a Ki Refiner and a Fiendgod Body Refiner. As a Fiendgod Body Refiner, he is at the late Zifu stage. As a Ki Refiner, he is at the early Zifu stage.”

An uproar in the audience! “Elemental ki at the early Zifu stage?” “Only a late stage Fiendgod Body Refiner?” “Not even at the peak of the Zifu stage; is he suicidal? This is insane.” “No wonder he wishes to enter a school; his elemental ki is only at the early Zifu stage. He is indeed a highly suitable candidate.”

The formidable figures seated above, upon hearing Ning’s level of power

in these two aspects, all began to shake their head and sigh. Prior to this, they had felt hopeful regarding Ning's chances of victories, but now, it seemed clear that the youth beneath them was throwing his life away.

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"Activate the sealing formation." Miss Ziyi gave the order. Around them appeared that giant barrier of light. Ning gave the light barrier a glance, then at Northmont Fox, who was watching far away, up above them.

"Kid, you are dead for sure! Even if you have a slightly stronger Fiendgod Body Refining technique, you are only at the late Zifu stage. You actually want to compete against the rhinoceros monster I command? You are committing suicide. You probably won't even have the chance to beg for mercy!" Fox was incomparably brash right now.

"Just prepare your second opponent for me," Ning said with a laugh. Northmont Fox was startled momentarily, but then he bellowed with rage, "Such audacity. Monoceros, go and kill this punk!"

The atmosphere instantly grew tense. In the private rooms above them, Wuji and Baiwei were feeling concern for Ning, while Fox was hoping for Ning's death. Others were all watching this play out with amusement. Still, in their hearts...they felt that Ning's chances for survival were simply too slim.

"Bang!" The six-meter tall, azure-skinned, horned man instantly transformed into an enormous Monoceros. Immediately afterwards, its entire body began to emit a blurry light as it once more transformed, this time into a sixty meter tall colossus. It had already completely executed its Heavenly Transformation technique to the utmost; its current level of power and speed could be described as incomparably astonishing.

"Prepare to die." The rhinoceros monster galloped forward, its enormous legs causing the hall to tremble with each step. As for Ning, two Darknorth Swords appeared out of nowhere into his hands.

Bang!

The giant rhinoceros monster instantly charged towards Ning, its

enormous hooves slamming and crushing down towards Ning, but missing each time. “Whoosh!” The Darknorth Swords in Ning’s hands transformed into lines of rainwater, slashing past one of the giant hooves. Instantly, blood splattered out, falling down like the rain. One of the rear hooves of the rhinoceros had been completely severed. It had been charging at high speed forward, and it instantly collapsed to the ground, its momentum carrying it to roll forward and slam directly against the grand sealing formation.

Rumble....

A colossal, mountain-shaking collision. Even the grand sealing formation trembled, a few ripples appear as it blocked the Monoceros monster which had lost a leg. The female attendants outside the grand sealing formation, along with Miss Ziyi, had been badly startled upon seeing the Monoceros charge towards them. They knew, rationally, that it couldn’t touch them, but they still took a few steps back.

The rear hoof of the Monoceros flew straight towards it, once more connecting with the trunk. “Growl....” The Monoceros rose to its feet, staring at Ning, a hint of dread and nervousness in its eyes.

Silence! All of the private rooms above them had fallen silent. Fox’s eyes were wide as he stared downwards. Everyone could easily tell who held the advantage.

Given how massive the Monoceros monster was, its hooves were enormous, yet tremendously quick. It was actually extremely hard to dodge its trampling attacks...but Ning had done so easily. Clearly, Ning’s agility was exceptionally formidable, far above that of the Monoceros. In addition, and more importantly, Ning’s swordplay was particularly powerful as well.

In addition to the magic treasure protecting the body of the Monoceros, after using the Heavenly Transformation technique, the body of the Monoceros was incomparably tough. And yet, its rear hoof had been chopped out with one blow? The power of this sword technique...was absolutely...

What no one realized was that Ning's divine will was controlling his Darknorth Sword. At this point in time, Ning's divine will was actually a bit more stronger than even that the power of a peak Zifu-stage Fiendgod Body Refiner. When matched with the 'Dao Domain' level of swordplay and executed with the Darknorth Swords, which were more powerful than ordinary Mortal-ranked magic treasures to begin with, how could the power of the blows not be astonishing?

"Aren't you going to admit defeat yet?" Ning glanced at the distant, towering figure of the Monoceros. There was a huge difference in size between the two, but at this point in time, the Monoceros' aura was clearly far feebler.

"Admit defeat? It isn't so easy to kill a Fiendgod Body Refiner. Even if you chopped me a hundred times, I wouldn't die." The Monoceros was entering a berserk state. "Kill him, kill him!" Northmount Fox roared from above, and the Monoceros raised its head, glancing at him. "Don't worry, Master." The Monoceros stared straight at Ning, its eyes seeming to emit flames.

"Since this is the case...then I will send you on your way." Ning held his Darknorth Swords in his hands, leisurely strolling forward. "Growl..." The Monoceros bellowed, once more charging towards Ning, its savage aura filling the heavens and seeming to contain the power to topple the mountains. As long as he could step on, strike, or even brush against Ning, Ning's body would probably explode.

Unfortunately...in terms of technique and comprehension, the difference between the two was simply too great. "Die," Ning said. His entire body transformed into a line of rainwater and slashed outwards. Whoosh...the thick neck of the Monoceros monster was slashed through. Ning flew upwards past him as blood sprayed wildly everywhere. The body and the head of the Monoceros had been completely cut into two pieces.

"Fire-Water Loti." Ning willed it. BOOM!

After having reached a new level of power as a Fiendgod Refiner, the amount of fire and water Ning could control had clearly increased

significantly. If he was to reach the Celestial Fiendgod level, then most likely his control over fire and water alone would be enough for him to easily slaughter a Primal Daoist, without him needing to use any other techniques.

One Fire-Water Lotus after another appeared out of nowhere in the surrounding area, slowly swiveling. Each one of them were at least thirty meters in diameter. In total, twelve Fire-Water Loti had bloomed!

As for the Monoceros which had just been decapitated by Ning, its body and its head were still in two locations. Its head fell between two Fire-Water Loti and was instantly ground down by them. The Fire-Water Loti continuously swiveled, crushing and destroying its body. The completely defenseless head was completely crushed into smithereens, but even after transforming into dust, it continued to be assaulted.

As for the other ten loti, they surrounded the entire enormous body of the Monoceros. Although there were parts of it that weren't completely surrounded, there was no way for the remaining parts of it to reform into a whole in this situation.

"Grind!" Ning stood there, within the enormous hall. His twelve giant Fire-Water Loti bloomed, and the petals of the loti swiveled, wildly grinding down the enormous body of the Monoceros, slaughtering it and preventing it from reforming. Naturally, this meant it didn't have a chance to admit defeat either.

This scene, both bloody and beautiful, caused the entire hall to fall silent. Ning just stood there...and then, he raised his head to look towards Northmont Fox.

"I told you to prepare a second subordinate." Ning laughed calmly, as casual and as relaxed as he had been when he first entered the hall.

Chapter 11: The Battle Which Brought Fame

“Excellent!” Back in the private room, Northmont Baiwei’s face was red from excitement. By his side was Hun Wuji, and his eyes were also filled with shock and delight. “I truly didn’t expect that Brother Ji Ning would be able to execute that rhinoceros monster with such ease,” Wuji said. “Those movements...that swordplay...he is truly inconceivable.”

Baiwei nodded hurriedly. “Formidable.” Baiwei was grinning so widely that his face threatened to split apart. He immediately shouted loudly, “Northmont Fox, I told you earlier that you were spouting crap. Now, you’ll have to swallow your crap back down!”

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Northmont Fox’s face was ashen. Both the actions of the seemingly ordinary youth below him as well as the words of Baiwei caused his heart to clench. He felt extremely miserable!

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“How formidable. What formidable swordplay!” Young master Qu stared downwards.

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“He was able to effortlessly execute that rhinoceros monster? Was that a divine ability? Or pure swordplay?” A black-robed youth frowned as he stared down towards the hall.

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The Boy of Universal Fire, that child who appeared six or seven years old and who had a golden necklace around his neck, had a look of deep contemplation on his face. He stared downwards at Ning, in the hall beneath him. “That sword technique...such power. It shouldn’t be a divine ability! Given how miraculous his swordcraft is...can it be that he has already reached the Dao Domain realm? That seems unlikely; he’s merely

a Zifu Disciple. It's rather unlikely that he could've reached such a high level of comprehension. But that sword...? Can it be that I was seeing things?"

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Although there were quite a few formidable figures present, Ning had executed his sword technique too quickly. Only the Boy of Universal Fire had been able to just get a vague sense that perhaps Ning had reached the 'Dao Domain' level in swordplay...but even he didn't dare to feel confident about it.

The grand sealing formation vanished.

"The Immortal practitioner which Northmont Baiwei sent out...was victorious!" Miss Ziyi called out in a clear voice, and then she looked towards Baiwei. "Are you willing to continue accepting further betting duels?"

"Yes." Ning, standing near her, spoke out instead of Baiwei. Baiwei, within his private room up above, was startled. He hurriedly sent to Ning, "Brother Ji Ning, you wish to continue?" Ning sent back, "As long as Northmont Fox is willing to send someone out, then we'll keep betting against him. Don't worry. It's already quite incredible that he was able to send out a rhinoceros monster. I imagine it will be quite hard for him to send out anything more powerful. And, even if he does...I am confident in being able to kill it. As for the stakes...you can add the 900 taels of liquefied elemental essence I won on top of the stakes as well."

Ning's mentally transmitted voice was filled with absolute confidence. He himself had already actively told Fox to prepare a second person; how could he choose to retreat now? "Fine." Baiwei's eyes lit up.

"Northmont Fox, my good brother, Ji Ning, is down there awaiting your challenge. Weren't you bragging quite fiercely earlier? As for the stakes...I'm willing to accept 900 taels, or even 1800 taels! I'm just afraid that you aren't!" Baiwei snickered as he spoke, his eyes filled with disdain and contempt. The words Baiwei had said, as well as the manner in which he had said them, when matched with that look in his eyes...these things

instantly caused the distant Fox to be utterly enraged. His face turned red and swollen.

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Northmont Fox's face looked ghastly. He glanced at several of his nearby friends, then said in a low growl, "I've suffered such humiliation...I am definitely going to slaughter that one named Ji Ning." Zhou Li shook his head and said, "To kill Ji Ning...that will be hard. This person's agility techniques are shocking, and his swordplay is exceedingly formidable. Even the rhinoceros monster who had used a divine ability was executed..."

"He isn't completely flawless." Another person nearby, a blue-robed, middle-aged man spoke out. "His divine ability is merely at the late Zifu stage, and his elemental ki is only at the early Zifu stage. His abilities as a Ki Refiner are so weak as to be negligible; he's only able to bring out his close-quarters-combat techniques in a fight. Thus, as long as you prevent him from drawing nearby, you'll have won half the battle."

Northmont Fox's eyes lit up. Right. This Ji Ning was only skilled in close combat. As long as one didn't let him draw near, then his defeat would be nigh. "Attend me," Northmont Fox immediately commanded. "Have the Whitewitch come."

Fox said to his nearby friends said, "This Whitewitch was offered to me by the White Warlock Sect. I had planned on enjoying her slowly, but after suffering such humiliation...I can't be bothered with personal enjoyment. Although this Whitewitch is somewhat weaker than the rhinoceros monster, she perfectly counters this Ji Ning."

"The White Warlock Sect?" Everyone nearby, Zhou Li included, was stunned. The White Warlock Sect...this wasn't a sect that was located within Stillwater Commandery. It currently desired to be permitted into Stillwatery Commandery, and it had offered a witch to Northmont Fox as a tactic. Zhou Li and the others naturally didn't dare to say too much about this matter.

Soon, a barefoot woman walked in. She was dressed in a white robe that

was hemmed with flowery patterns, and had long black hair that fell to her buttocks. She had a pair of dazzling, bewitching eyes, and she exuded an indescribable magnetism. Her gaze was fixed upon Northmont Fox's figure, and Fox felt a fire build in his loins as well.

"What an exceptional specimen." Fox ground his teeth, then said, "Whitewitch, your White Warlock Sect gave you to me. Your life, your everything...it all belongs to me."

"Your slave understands. Your slave belongs entirely to you, Lord." The Whitewitch responded in a soft voice, so gentle it seemed to be caressing his heart.

Fox nodded. "That kid named Ji Ning, standing there in the hall below us, killed that rhinoceros monster under my command. Now, I have a feeling of rage that I must give vent to. I order you...to go kill this Ji Ning."

"Your slave is to go kill Ji Ning?" The Whitewitch, who had been calm this entire time, was instantly stunned. Previously, she had been with the other servants in the other private room. Through the window, they had watched everything happen below them. She knew exactly how formidable this Ji Ning was! She knew that in terms of power, she was quite a bit weaker than even the Monoceros. As for Ji Ning...she had no confidence in being able to defeat him at all.

When the White Warlock Sect had sent her here, they had done so in order for her to entice and mesmerize Northmont Fox!

"Hrm?" Fox frowned. "Are you not going to go? Then what's the point of keeping you!" "No." In her heart, the Whitewitch secretly cursed this man, who was of the primary lineage of the Northmont clan, for his viciousness. She hurriedly said, "Young master, it isn't that your slave isn't willing. It is that your slave doesn't feel there is any chance of killing this Ji Ning. Your slave personally witnessed him killing the rhinoceros monster."

Fox shook his head. "You don't need to worry about this. This Ji Ning is extremely weak as a Ki Refiner; his only strength lies in his close combat abilities! So long as you can make him unable to draw near you, you will definitely win. As I recall, you have a secret binding skill that is extremely

formidable.”

The Whitewitch gritted her teeth. That was a technique that was meant for pleasure on the bed. When she and Northmont Fox had been making love, she had once made it so that her hair had rapidly lengthened, then tied herself up with it. At that time, while they were lovemaking, Northmont Fox had even asked her about her technique, and she had naturally bragged about it. Who would have imagined that the end result was this?

“You are skilled in constricting your foes. In addition, your White Warlock Sect is most famous for your venomous bugs. Amongst them, your technique of ‘Body-Birthing Bugs’ are particularly famous,” Northmont Fox said.

The Whitewitch’s face turned ashen. The Body-Birthing Bugs? This was indeed a technique of the White Warlock Sect that made others terrified upon hearing of it, but if she were to execute it...if she was lucky, she would only suffer severe damage to her elemental ki, but if she was slightly less lucky, she would die.

The Whitewitch stared at Northmont Fox...she understood that this Northmont Fox fully intended to have her fight to her death, if that was what was needed to kill Ji Ning.

“You can choose to go. Or, you can choose death.” Northmont Fox’s voice was cold. The Whitewitch gritted her teeth. “Your slave shall go.” “Good.” Fox nodded. “The skills of your White Warlock Sect perfectly counter him. You still have a chance at surviving. Go to the hall and kill Ji Ning.”

“Alright.” The Whitewitch immediately turned and left, her body swaying. As Northmont Fox watched her depart, a lecherous light flashed through his eyes. He let out a low sigh. “What a waste of a beauty. Still, there are plenty of beauties in the world. This Ji Ning, however, must die. I have to give vent to my rage.” He turned to stare through the window towards Ning, his eyes filled with savagery now.

“Northmont Baiwei. You just won 900 taels, but now you are going to

give them back to me? Fine. I'll bet against you again and have you send me those 900 taels back to me."

.....

Within the hall. Ning stood there by himself, a hint of a faint smile on his face. He was calm and unflappable. Since he had already decided to reveal his fierceness...how could a single battle be enough?

"Eh?" Ning looked forward. From a staircase up ahead, a barefoot, white-robed woman came striding down, her long black hair falling to her buttocks. Her swaying motion as she walked was filled with allure. "She has come to fight me?" Ning frowned, puzzled. "This woman seems to be more suited for seduction."

The Whitewitch walked to the jewels in the corner, filling them with her elemental ki. Miss Ziyi called out in a high voice, "The Immortal practitioner which young master Fox has sent out is a peak Zifu-level Ki Refiner."

"Just a Ki Refiner? A Ki Refiner is at a disadvantage to begin with when facing a Fiendgod Body Refiner. She actually dares to come?" Ning pondered for a moment. "She must have a special technique." Although he was merely at the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] as a Ki Refiner, the jewels served as a test for the purity and density of the divine power within his body, then determined his level.

Since ancient times to the present day, the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] had always been the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique. Although Ning was only at the seventh stage, the purity of his divine power truly was comparable to a late Fiendgod Refiner.

"Boom!" The grand sealing formation once more lit up. Within the enormous barrier of light, only Ning and the Whitewitch remained.

A lady of a sect of warlocks, filled with allure. A handsome, delicate-looking fur-clad youth.

"I was forced to come. Please show mercy." The Whitewitch bowed slightly.

Ning just smiled. He didn't say anything.

Whoosh! Suddenly, every single strand of the Whitewitch's long black hair, previously waist-long, emanated with a devilish red light. Instantly, that long hair began to grow rapidly...and an instant later, it filled the air. Countless strands of black hair swept all-encompassingly towards Ning.

"Not good." Baiwei, in the private room above, was shocked. "If Ji Ning is caught and bound, he will be in trouble." Wuji was nervous as well. "Ji Ning is skilled in close combat. His elemental ki is only at the early Zifu stage; the power with which he can control magic treasures is simply too weak."

Ning stared at the all-encompassing strands of hair, but just revealed a smile. He knew what his opponent's ability was, now. "So she wants to bind me."

Rustle rustle rustle...

In the area around them, rainwater appeared out of nowhere. The rain was very light. When landing on someone, it felt cool, refreshing, and comfortable. The countless drops of rainwater instantly filled the entire grand sealing formation.

"Layered Water Walls." Ning's gaze was focused on the black hair sweeping towards him. Instantly, one layer after another of incomparably sturdy curtains of water began to condense. In the past half year, Ning had developed the [Rainwater Sutra], and he had indeed risen quite a bit in terms of comprehension and insight. The power of the 'rainwater' of his Rainwater Sword Domain had risen the most, and Ning had furthermore spent a great deal of time focusing on these curtains of water.

In fact, he had focused on developing this 'Layered Watered Walls' technique, and in terms of intricacy, it was nearly comparable to the 'Rain Line' technique, except it was meant to pressure and bind his foes.

"Slash slash slash..." The countless strands of black hair strove to draw close to Ning, but the layers of watery curtains were incomparably durable and entangling. This technique of the Whitewitch's was meant to be used for pleasure on the bed; while it was exceptionally strong in terms of

binding power, in terms of the innate penetrating power of those strands of hair, it was very weak. There was no way it could pass through the Layered Water Walls.

Those countless strands of hair flailed in midair, effortlessly blocked by the Layered Water Walls.

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“Rainwater Sword Domain!” The Boy of Universal Fire rose to his feet as well. He tossed that bone to the side of the table, staring down at Ji Ning.

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“Dao Domain. Rainwater. Rainwater Sword Domain...a Zifu Disciple who has a Dao Domain?” All of the formidable figures who had been calmly watching this battle were now shocked. For someone who was merely at the Zifu Disciple level to have reached the Dao Domain level, this...this was something out of the legends! None of them had been this powerful at the Zifu Disciple level.

“A Zifu Disciple capable of comprehending a Dao Domain? Oh no...oh no! So many people are watching here today. When word of this spreads... if the sect learns that a monstrous genius such as him was refused entrance because of me...I will be in trouble.” Zhou Li, next to Northmont Fox, had an ugly look on his face.

.....

The emergence of the Rainwater Sword Domain had shocked everyone. As for Ning, he stood in the hall, as calm as ever.

“Admit defeat. I’ll give you a path to survival.” Ning stood there, surrounded by rainwater. He glanced at the distant Whitewitch.

Chapter 12: The Pebble That Aroused a Thousand-Story Wave

The Whitewitch, upon seeing Ji Ning display the might of his Rainwater Sword Domain, felt her heart instantly turn icy cold. “A path to survival? What path to survival do I have?” She immediately began to activate the secret technique of her sect within her body. All of the elemental ki in her blood, flesh, and essence began to condense, and her entire body began to emit a bloody glow.

Deep within her Zifu, twelve Gu-Bugs that were hidden there began to move about. The bugs within the bug nest she kept on her also began to move.

“Alas.” The distant Ning shook his head. It seemed as though this woman was being forced by Northmont Fox to fight to the death. Ning immediately prepared to execute his Waterflame Lotus, planning to send this woman directly to the Yellow Springs.

But suddenly...

“We admit defeat!” A deep voice rang out. “Eh?” Ning raised his head, glancing over in astonishment. Northmont Fox, up in his private room, appeared very calm. He even grinned towards Ning. “I didn’t expect that today, I would have the chance to see a genius such as young master Ji Ning. You are merely an early-stage Zifu Disciple, and yet you’ve already comprehended a Dao Domain...admirable, admirable. I, Northmont Fox, am wholeheartedly convinced by my defeat at the hands of young master Ji Ning.”

The Whitewitch stared in astonishment towards Northmont Fox as well. She knew exactly how savage and wild Fox had been previously; he had insisted on her going all out to kill Ji Ning. But now, in the blink of an eye, before she had even lost, Fox had admitted defeat? In this battle, she represented Fox, and Fox was the one doing the betting. Thus, upon his admission of defeat, the battle ended.

Whooooosh. The long black hair of the Whitewitch quickly retracted, changing from three hundred meters to its normal waist-high length.

“Young master Ji Ning was victorious,” Miss Ziyi instantly called out in a high voice. The way in which she had referred to Ning had changed; previously, she had referred to him as ‘the Immortal practitioner who Northmont Baiwei sent out’, but now, she directly referred to him as young master Ji Ning. This was because she knew very well what it meant for a Zifu Disciple to gain insight into a Dao Domain.

The Dao Domain was a level which only Primal Daoists were generally able to reach. For a Zifu Disciple to be able to comprehend a Dao Domain...anyone capable of this was a truly monstrous talent, or perhaps even a major power who had reincarnated. Based on what she had heard regarding people like this, so long as they survived, they would train in the finest of Ki Refining techniques, and there was no question that they would become Primal Daoists!

If it was said that she treated Northmont Baiwei and Northmont Fox with care, due to their family background, she now treated this Ji Ning with the same care due to his innate, terrifying talent.

It must be understood... Primal Daoists were truly influential figures. If one then ascended to become an Immortal, even the Marquisate of Stillwater would actively reach out to befriend that person. Such a person would be capable of influencing the major powers of Stillwater Commandery. A monstrous talent like Ning...so long as he survived, he would have a 100% chance of becoming a Primal Daoist. As for becoming an Immortal? The chances for that were extremely high as well.

“Young master Ji Ning, are you going to continue with another betting duel?” Miss Ziyi smiled towards Ning, and as a fox-spirit, her smile was dazzlingly bewitching.

“Hahaha, after young master Ji Ning revealed his Dao Domain, who would dare battle him?”

“There’s no way for us to find another Zifu Disciple who has comprehended a Dao Domain. Anyone we send would definitely lose.”

“Let the betting duels come to an end.”

“The spiritfruit wine for this series of betting duels shall go to young master Baiwei and young master Ji Ning.”

Laughter rang out from each of the private rooms. Since they didn't have any grudge against Ning, why would they wish to offend a monstrous talent like him? Although these people were elites amongst their various sects, and although many were Wanxiang Adepts, it was still quite hard for Wanxiang Adepts to leap to the Primal Daoist level. Actually, they still weren't even aware that Ning's soul had already reached the 'divine sense' level. If they did, they probably would be completely speechless.

It must be understood that by relying on his Rainwater Sword Domain and divine sense, Ning had passed even the 'divine abilities trial' left behind by Daoist Threelives, once of the most ancient of individuals who had been born when the Cosmos were first created. Thus, he had acquired the [Starseizing Hand].

But of course, Ning knew that the amount of talent he had displayed today was enough. The divine ability [Starseizing Hand]...he definitely couldn't reveal it to anyone. If he did, he would be courting death! Of course, he could still use it; after all, given the monstrous talent he had already revealed, even if he unleashed an attack that exceeded the expectations of others, onlookers would come up with their own explanations, such as Ning having learnt some sort of a special divine ability, or being in possession of a very unique magic treasure, or that his level of comprehension was very high. In short, it was normal for a monstrous talent like him to reveal monstrous levels of power.

“Young master Ji Ning.” Northmont Fox was in his distant room, a smile on his face. He called out in high voice, “Northmont Baiwei and I have always been at loggerheads. Previously, I offended you, but it wasn't because of you, young master Ji Ning; what I did, I did to take aim at Northmont Baiwei. Still, I did offend you, and I hope you will pardon me for that. At the same time, I would like to warn you, young master Ji Ning, that Northmont Baiwei is a two-faced tiger. He's quite the faker! Don't be fooled by him.”

Ning raised his head, giving him a glance. What a Northmont Fox! Formidable! Previously, he had acted with such red-eyed bravado and arrogance, but now, after seeing Ning display his Rainwater Sword Domain, it was as though a bucket of ice water had been poured over his head, waking him up. He thus immediately stated that his earlier actions were directed towards Northmont Baiwei, so as to ease the tensions between him and Ning. At the same time, he also tried to disrupt the relationship between Ning and Baiwei.

“And, young master Ji Ning, if you wish to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect...there will be absolutely no problems at all.” Fox laughed as he spoke. Just moments ago, he had arrogantly stated that Ning could forget about ever joining the Skysplitter Sword Sect, but in the blink of an eye, he had changed his tune. Ning mused to himself that one truly couldn’t underestimate any of the young masters of the Marquisate.

“Northmont Fox, you truly are shamelessly thick-faced. As for entering a school? Given the talents of my brother, Ji Ning, he can enter any school he wishes.” Baiwei immediately began to laugh. “As for you trying to stir up strife between us, everyone in Stillwater City knows of your reputation, and everyone also knows what sort of a person I, Northmont Baiwei, am.”

“Only after spending much time with a person will you understand their heart. You two-faced tiger, do you think I can’t see straight through your façade?” Fox let out a cold laugh. Baiwei shook his head. “Oh? Then I’ll just wait for you to see through.”

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Suddenly, a figure shot out from one of the private rooms through the window, moving as fast as a streak of light. The grand sealing formation had already been dispersed, and the figure flew directly towards Ning.

“Eh?” Ning glanced at this woman. She seemed to be roughly ten years old, and was innately endowed with a noble grace. “Young master Ji Ning, my name is Hu Shui. My grandfather is the leader of the Thousand Rivers School. Given your talent, young master Ji Ning...as long as you are willing to enter our Thousand Rivers School, I imagine that even the Immortal

ancestor of our Thousand Rivers School would be willing to accept you as a disciple.” The beautiful, lithe maiden with hairpins in her hair laughed as she spoke, and her voice was so pleasant to the ear.

Ning glanced in surprise at this young woman named Hu Shui. Thousand Rivers School? What school was this? He had never heard of it before. He had to admit, though, the number of schools within Stillwater Commandery that he knew of could be counted on one hand. He came from Swallow Mountain, and his experience was rather lacking.

“Miss Hu Shui, your Thousand Rivers School, in our Stillwater Commandery, isn’t even ranked in the top ten. You wish for young master Ji Ning to join your Thousand Rivers School? Haha...aren’t you being a bit presumptuous?” A black-robed man flew down as well.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! One figure after another immediately flew down, and even Northmont Baiwei and Hun Wuji flew down as well. Baiwei hurriedly sent to Ning, “Ji Ning, for now, don’t agree to enter any of these schools.”

“Alright.” Ning also understood the principle of not acting impetuously or with haste. Stillwater Commandery had many schools, and the relationships between the various alliances and schools could be very complex. Choosing a school, for him, was a major affair. Naturally, he had to be cautious.

Ning immediately looked at all of the powerful figures. Only some of them were from branches of major schools; others included members of tribes and sects. Some just wanted to make friends with Ning. A heroic figure like him...why wouldn’t they want to befriend him? As for being jealous? Perhaps in their hearts, they felt a hint of jealousy towards him, but they all understand that Stillwater Commandery was filled with countless geniuses. If they kept on feeling jealous of this one or that one, then they might as well not bother training to becoming Immortals at all.

“Everyone,” Ning said hurriedly, “I’ve just arrived at Stillwater Commandery a short time ago. Joining a school is a major affair, and I must consider it carefully. I’m unable to come to a clear decision in such a

short period of time.”

“Ah, true. One cannot be rash with regards to such a major affair.”
“Young master Ji Ning, I am Meng Shan of the Meng clan.” “Young master Ji Ning...”

All of them began to chat conversationally. Immortal practitioners had astonishingly good memories, and so Ning quickly learned and memorized everyone’s names. In truth, there were many figures who hadn’t revealed themselves prior to this. Ning now met them one by one, and only now did he truly understand that Stillwater Commandery was a place of crouching tigers and hidden dragons.

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“Ji Ning? Swordplay?” The Boy of Universal Fire said a few words with Ning as well, then departed. While leading his servant to leave the Carefree Caverns, he furrowed his brows, pondering to himself about Ning. “Since he chose to reincarnate in Stillwater Commandery...if he is the reincarnation of a major power, then in his previous life, he should’ve been living within Stillwater Commandery as well. But in the past few decades, I haven’t heard of any major powers who were skilled in swordplay who entered the cycle of reincarnation. Even if they reincarnated, their Immortal friends should be here to welcome them. Why would they voluntarily wish to join a school?”

“Can it be that an error occurred in the reincarnation process, and that in his past life, he didn’t live in our Stillwater Commandery? Or is there some other reason?” The Boy of Universal Fire continued to ponder this question.

As a reincarnated Immortal, he hadn’t been living for particularly long in this life. His recollections of his previous life were still hazy and indistinct. Every so often, a memory would flash past his mind, or he might suddenly feel that something was very familiar to him! Although his memories from his past life had yet to completely awaken, his ability to comprehend formations and understand the Dao had risen at an astonishing speed. Clearly, he was benefiting from the hidden memories

from his past life. As his strength grew, his memories would become increasingly clear, until one day, he would completely regain his past memories.

But of course, there were also some truly major powers who would directly awaken their memories, but that was extremely, extremely difficult.

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Northmont Fox also went up to say a few words to Ning. He verbally sparred with Baiwei as well, and then led his group of servants to depart.

Within his carriage. Fox sat there by himself. He was frowning. He was thinking back to everything that had happened within the Carefree Caverns, starting from the very first words he exchanged with Baiwei. He thought very, very carefully...

“Fighting against Northmont Baiwei is one thing. How did this Ji Ning get involved? It seems as though this person has tremendous potential; in the future, he might be influential enough to affect the major powers of Stillwater Commandery, and even the question of whether or not my father will be able to become the Marquis of Stillwater.” Fox frowned as he continued to ponder this matter. There were actually quite a few potential candidates within the Northmont clan for the position of the next Marquis.

The more powerful one was, the more supporters one would have. Naturally, the greater one’s chances would then be of becoming the next Marquis of Stillwater.

“Ugh! Northmont Baiwei actually encountered a monster like him. His luck is too damn good.” Fox gritted his teeth, then shook his head.

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Ning bade Hun Wuji farewell, then followed Northmont Baiwei to the Ninestar Immortal Carriage once more.

Within the carriage. The Whitewater Hound was lying to the side, while Baiwei and Ning were both seated. Baiwei’s face was all smiles, and he was

incomparably delighted. He hurriedly said, "Ji Ning, the Rainwater Sword Domain you displayed this time truly stunned everyone present. You didn't see the way Northmont Fox's face instantly changed. I understand this punk quite well. Although he's vicious and arrogant, he can also change his attitude very quickly. This is one of his rare strengths."

"For now, stay with me. My estate has many places reserved for guests. This time, you've truly made a name for yourself. There were many people there within the Carefree Caverns, and news of this battle of yours will quickly spread to quite a few schools and sects. There will definitely also be many who will wish for a genius such as yourself to join them. If you stay in my place, you won't be disturb. Tomorrow, I'll prepare an intelligence report for you which will introduce you to all of the larger powers within Stillwater Commandery. Naturally, this will also include information on the various schools. You can make a good choice based on it."

Ning nodded and smiled. "Then I'll have to trouble you for that, Brother Baiwei."

Chapter 13: Northmont Blacktiger

It was already late at night. The light of the crescent moon shone down upon this giant, ancient city. Within it was a Ninestar Immortal Carriage, wreathed in fiery flames, which was entering the Northmont Blacktiger Estate.

“Young master.” “Young master.” The late night guards all called out towards the carriage respectfully. Northmont Baiwei led Ji Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and his maidservant out of the carriage, and then the Ninestar Immortal Carriage, without anyone controlling it, entered the estate on its own.

“Let’s go,” Baiwei said with a smile, leading them forward. Ning looked around carefully. The door they were entering was a side door.

“How large.” As they moved forward, the scenery continuously changed, and there were pavilions and buildings everywhere. Everything was unspeakably beautiful. “An estate more than ten kilometers in circumference...this can compare with some of the cities I saw in my past life on Earth.”

“Come into this garden. This place is where all of our guests stay.” Baiwei was striding forward atop a series of lotus petals which formed a path over a large pool of water. There were also all sorts of fishes around them, and beneath the water there were some luminous pearls. The light from them caused the entire pool to seem like a jade lake for Immortals.

Within one of the quiet, private courtyards. “Brother Ji Ning, you can rest here for a period of time. Generally speaking, schools take on new students in the twelfth lunar month,” Baiwei said with a laugh. “Tomorrow, I will arrange for a book detailing the various major powers of Stillwater Commandery to be brought to you. You can choose carefully, and you can also often come out for a stroll and listen to the conversations going on in the outside world. Only then should you decide which school to join.”

Laughing, Ning nodded. Baiwei continued, “Alright, it is quite late, and I won’t disturb you any further. If there is anything you need, just instruct

the servants. I will leave now.”

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This residence was clearly meant for entertaining guests. It was quite large and quite roomy, and there were five buildings within this residence itself, along with twelve servants that could be summoned at any time, all of them beautiful, flower-like women.

“Young master.” The twelve maidservants all bowed. Their leader was a tall, willowy Xiantian lifeform. “Prepare my bath for me,” Ning instructed. “When bathing, I do not wish to be disturbed.” “Yes.” The tall, willowy woman acknowledged his commands.

Almost all Immortal cultivators possessed extremely good self-control. Even those who were lustful would only view women as a form of enjoyment. For example, even someone like Northmont Fox would order the Whitewitch to her death when he felt it was necessary.

A short time later. Within the room. Within an enormous bathtub made from slick, polished rock. Hot air steamed everywhere. Ning lay there within the bathtub, head resting against a pillow. By his hands was a tray of fruit and wine.

“Ning, son.” The Whitewater Hound, resting next to the bathtub, glanced at Ning. “You shocked everyone today with your exploits, and did so in the Carefree Caverns, one of the top entertainment venues of the entire Stillwater Commandery. This news will surely spread quickly. Did you do this with the intention of...?”

“Right. I intended to shock everyone today,” Ning said. “The only people I truly have grudges against belong to Snowdragon Mountain. There are no problems between myself and the various other major powers. A monstrously talented youth whom they have no grudges against, who had just reached the early Zifu stage who wishes to join a sect...they will do anything they can to get me to join their schools, or to befriend me.”

“As for my sole enemy, Snowdragon Mountain, I don’t know if they are still paying attention to me. Even if they are...I am currently within the Northmont Blacktiger Estate. There is nothing they can do to me,” Ning

said.

“Right.” The Whitewater Hound nodded. “If my predictions are correct,” Ning said solemnly, “Perhaps tomorrow, Baiwei’s father, Northmont Blacktiger, will come to pay a personal visit to me.”

Ning’s divine sense was exceptionally sensitive. He knew right away that there weren’t any eavesdropping tools or monitoring tools here. This was a place for receiving guests; if guests were to discover that they were being monitored, then it would cause tremendous problems. Northmont Blacktiger naturally wouldn’t act in such a manner.

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Within a dark space. A tall, muscular, bald man dressed in a black uniform was seated in the lotus position atop a fiery red boulder.

“Slither...” A giant black serpent, more than three hundred meters long, coiled around this dark region. This giant black creature looked like a serpent, but upon taking a closer glance...one would find that it was completely formed from black flames. Its scales, fangs, and body were all formed from countless black flames.

The black flames swirled around this area, and the head of the serpent was close to that of the bald man. “Eh?” The black-uniformed bald man frowned, then opened his eyes. His gaze was like thunder, striking fear into the hearts of men.

“Whoosh!” He exhaled, and instantly, the black flaming serpent around him transformed into countless black flames, wildly surged into his mouth. He swallowed it all into his stomach. “Baiwei. Come in.” The bald, black-uniformed man gave the order.

Creaaaaak. A door appeared in this dark space, and Baiwei walked in. He said respectfully, “Father, I have news.”

This person was the awe-inspiring potential candidate to be the next Marquis of Stillwater – Northmont Blacktiger. Someone whose power was truly capable of shaking the heavens. “Speak,” Northmont Blacktiger glanced disdainfully out of the corner of his eyes at his son.

Baiwei instantly recounted with great clarity today's events at the Carefree Caverns. Blacktiger, hearing this, frowned. "The reincarnation of a major power?" Blacktiger mused to himself, "If he is a reincarnated Immortal, he should've been received by his friends from his former life long ago. Why would he choose to enter a school?" Baiwei just waited to the side quietly.

"Baiwei," Blacktiger nodded lightly. "It is good that you can make a friend like him. Tomorrow, I will go visit him. It's late. Go get some rest." "Yes," Baiwei said, then immediately left this dark space.

Within the darkness, Blacktiger continued to ponder, a considering look in his eyes. "The various schools, clans, sects, and Fiendgods...I haven't heard of anyone entering the cycle of reincarnation in the past twenty or so years. However, for this person to have reached such a level at such a young age...even if he isn't the reincarnation of a major figure, he must have encountered some sort of incredible stroke of karmic luck."

"Whooosh." Blacktiger no longer considered this matter. He opened his mouth, and countless flames charged out from it, quickly forming that enormous serpent of black flames around him once more. This giant serpent seemed to be quite comfortable within this dark region.

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The next morning.

The Golden Crow hung high in the sky, its light covering the entire Stillwater City. Within Stillwater City's Northmont Blacktiger Estate. Within the residence where Ning was currently located. He was seated in front of a table which was covered with fruits and wine. Ning's fingers were outstretched in a plucking manner, and between them was hanging a Waterflame Lotus that was constantly swiveling.

"Water, fire, wind," Ning mused softly to himself. "Waterflame Lotus... this is formed from three different types of the True Meaning of the Dao; that of fire, water, and wind. They condense and form it. With regards to water, I have comprehended my Rainwater Sword Domain, but am somewhat weaker in fire and wind."

Ning stared at his fingers and the Waterflame Lotus swiveling between them. He focused on the mysteries contained within, slowly gaining greater insight into them. At his current level of insight, with but a thought, he could begin to touch the Dao.

Suddenly, a maidservant ran over from far away. "Hm?" The Waterflame Lotus between Ning's fingers disappeared into thin air. "Young master, young master Baiwei sends word. He will immediately come to visit you, along with the master of the estate." The maidservant's face was filled with nervousness.

The master of the estate? Ning frowned, then immediately rose to his feet. "Alright. I understand. You can leave now." "Yes." The maidservant immediately left.

"The master of the estate? Northmont Blacktiger? So he really did come." Although Ning's will and resolve was firm, in the face of this potential next Marquis of Stillwater, he still felt an invisible pressure.

The Whitewater Hound that had been lying next to him stood up as well. "Come," Ning said. "Let's go welcome him." He immediately led the Whitewater Hound towards the doorway. But as soon as he arrived at the doorway, he saw three figures appear in the distance.

The person walking in the center was a bald man in a black uniform who appeared extremely heroic and imposing. This bald man's eyes seemed to be as deep as the abyss, and as he slowly walked over, it seemed as though he was one with the surrounding universe. An invisible, majestic presence swept towards Ning, making Ning feel as though he couldn't even breathe.

"Dangerous, dangerous, dangerous!" Ning looked at this person, but in his heart, he had an inexplicable feeling of tremendous danger impending.

Ning could tell that it wasn't because he was in imminent danger; rather, it was that the person before him simply posed far too great of a threat to him, and was most likely capable of instantly killing him without giving him the chance to resist at all.

"So he is Northmont Blacktiger? How could his aura be so powerful and

so dominating?” Ning was secretly shocked. Baiwei was a graceful, handsome young master. But his father, Blacktiger, was like an ancient Fiendgod who had been lying hidden for countless ages, filled with inexhaustible savageness and dominance. The look in his eyes...the way he walked...it was all filled with ‘savagery’. As he walked over, it was as though an ancient, primordial beast was walking over.

One’s aura was built up over the course of many years. The fact that the two of them, father and son, had such completely different auras made Ning feel puzzled.

“The two by his side...” Ning glanced at them. To one side of Blacktiger was his son, Baiwei. To his other side was a pale-faced, beardless old man. This old man had a pair of triangular-pupiled eyes. Even when smiling, he gave others a sinister, cold feeling. Upon noticing this old man, Ning immediately realized how terrifying he was as well.

If Blacktiger could be described as an ancient, primordial beast, then this old man was like an icy, sinister viper. If one didn’t focus on him, one might not even notice his presence, but upon focusing on him carefully, one would discover how frightening he was.

“Dangerous!” Ning sensed how terrifying this old man was as well.

Northmont Blacktiger. The triangular-pupiled old man. The sense of danger these two made Ning feel...was incredibly strong. Even that Xue Hongyi who he had encountered was like nothing more than a weak ant before these two.

“Such power. They are too strong, too powerful. No wonder he is someone capable of becoming the next Marquis of Stillwater,” Ning said to himself. But of course, Ning’s soul was extremely powerful, and so he was superficially able to maintain his calm.

“Hahaha...” Blacktiger laughed loudly, and his heroic, noble laughter caused the surrounding space itself to tremble. “I heard Baiwei praise his friend endlessly, but I didn’t believe him. Now that I have had a chance to see him for myself...he truly is extraordinary. A Zifu Disciple who stands before me without batting an eye? I can count such figures on a single

hand.”

“I came here to take a look at you. Not bad, not bad,” Blacktiger laughed. “Today, I have other matters to attend to, so I won’t tarry. In the future, after you join a school, you must often come and visit my estate. Baiwei is lucky to have a friend such as yourself.”

“Making friends with Brother Baiwei is also the good fortune of myself, Ji Ning.” Ning acted and spoke with modesty and respect. Blacktiger laughed loudly, then departed with the triangle-pupiled old man. The old man gave Ning a long look, then nodded slightly as well.

The two of them left.

“Whew.” Baiwei let out a long breath. He half-turned, first verifying that his father had departed. Only then did he completely relax. “It’s been so many years, but I’m still so nervous whenever I am in front of my father.”

Chapter 14: Black-White College

“Right. Ji Ning, this book holds records of all of the major powers that are located within Stillwater Commandery. It is quite detailed.”

Northmont Baiwei waved his hand, and a foot-long book, appearing as massive and as heavy as a shield, appeared. There wasn't a single word on the cover of this book. He handed it directly over.

Ning stared at the enormous, shield-sized book. He blinked. “This is too big...”

Northmont Baiwei began to chortle. “Think about how large Stillwater Commandery is! This book holds detailed records regarding every single power within Stillwater Commandery, and it even describes some of the magic treasures and techniques which the more important Immortal cultivators of each sect possess.”

“It's as detailed as that?” Ning was amazed. “I just want to choose a school to enter.” Baiwei grinned. “I couldn't be bothered to compile something, so I just had my estate prepare a copy of the pre-existing intelligence report regarding the various major powers in the region. This is classified at a fairly low level. The top-secret version is hundreds of books long.”

Ning was speechless. All he needed to do was consider which school he was going to join, but Baiwei had prepared a copy of a full intelligence report. No wonder there wasn't even a single word on its cover. “Take it,” Baiwei said. Ning immediately accepted it.

Baiwei continued, “I imagine you will need quite some time to read this intelligence report. Actually, given your current power, Brother Ji Ning, if you are to enter a school, you must select one of the absolute best schools which Stillwater Commandery possesses. Within our Stillwater Commandery, aside from the Raindragon Guard and the Marquisate, there are a total of eight supreme powers. I'll give you a brief explanation of them. Later, when you read the book, you'll be able to move through it much more quickly.” Ning nodded.

“These eight supreme powers are divided up as into three major schools, three major tribes, and the two major churches,” Baiwei said seriously. “They all have incomparably long histories, and their roots are unfathomably deep. Although some of the other powers might have Immortals guarding over them, compared to these eight supreme powers, they are still lacking in some manner. Their Immortals might not be strong enough, or their foundations might be a bit unstable, or they might not have existed long enough.”

“The three major schools refer to the Black-White College, the Skysplitter Sword Sect, and the Hundred Flowers Fairyland,” Baiwei said. “These three schools vastly surpass all of the other schools within Stillwater Commandery. The Thousand Rivers School, the North River School...they are all much weaker than these three major schools.”

“All three have an incredible background.”

“The Skysplitter Sword Sect is the only one of the three which focuses on swordplay. It has many disciples, and only by slaughtering a bloody path through the others will the elites of the school rise to the peak. All of them are exceptionally talented, combat-eager figures.” Baiwei continued, “Enough about this one, though; you already know about it.”

Ning nodded. “Please describe the other two.” Baiwei smiled. “The Hundred Flowers Fairyland only recruits female disciples. Since they only accept female disciples, no matter how much of a genius you are, Ji Ning, you won’t be able to enter. This school is situated in a standalone dimension which a major power set up single-handedly. That place is known as the Hundred Flowers Fairyland.”

Established a standalone dimension? Ning’s own underwater estate was also in a dimension of its own.

“I have no intentions of joining the Skysplitter Sword Sect, and I can’t enter the Hundred Flowers Fairyland. Then what of the Black-White College?” Ning asked. Baiwei chortled. “For now, let’s not discuss the Black-White College.”

“Why not?” Ning asked urgently. “I have my reasons,” Baiwei said. “Let

me now describe the three major tribes of the eight great powers. They are the Eastriver clan, the Dragonhunter clan, and the Bluewood clan.”

“The Dragonhunter clan has a divine ability suited for archers that it does not teach to any outsiders,” Baiwei said. “This Dragonhunter clan often produces some truly powerful master archers. Master archers, especially extremely powerful, top-tier ones....they can locate their enemies from far away with their divine sense, at a distance of a thousand kilometers or even greater, then release their arrow and badly injure or even kill their foes from that distance. Even if they cannot kill their foes, they can immediately retreat.”

Ning’s eyes lit up. He himself was in possession of a divine sense that could stretch to a distance of over a hundred kilometers. In addition, his divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], allowed the power of his hands to reach a terrifying level. He could use one hand to grip the bow, and the other to knock the arrow.

“The Eastriver clan. They are extremely skilled in commanding water. I’d strongly urge you not to fight against experts of the Eastriver clan in an aquatic environment.”

“The Bluewood clan is the oldest of these three major clans, comparable to our Northmont clan in age. This is a tribe that was established as far back as the Fiendgod era,” Baiwei said. “The Bluewood clan is extremely skilled in controlling golems and constructs, and many of the constructs within Stillwater Commandery were provided by them. Over the course of countless years...who knows how many powerful constructs the Bluewood clan has amassed? They, too, are a power which no one wishes to antagonize.”

Ning nodded. Three major schools, three major tribes. All of them were extraordinary.

“The two major sects are the Heavenly Saint Church and the Blood God Church.”

“The Heavenly Saint Church acts in a manner which is big-hearted and honest, but also dominating and overbearing,” Baiwei said. “They have

existed for an extremely long time, and they are also exceptionally mysterious.”

“The Blood God Church was erected sixty million years ago; it is extremely evil and crazed. The members of the Blood God Church can be described as ‘madmen’; they will often commit major sins, then suffer pursuit and assault from the Raindragon Guards.”

“The Raindragon Guards will pursue after and kill them?” Ning asked, puzzled. Baiwei smiled. “Ji Ning, you should know that in this world, there is such a thing as karmic merits, yes?” “Yes,” Ning nodded.

Of course he knew. It was precisely because of the good karma that he had accumulated that after being sent to the Netherworld Kingdom, he had been assigned to be reborn in the Heaven Realm. However, because of that disturbance in the Netherworld Kingdom, he had entered the mortal realm yet again. If he hadn’t been able to react quickly, he probably would’ve had his soul shattered.

“Acting benevolently accumulates positive karma; acting vilely results in the creation of sin,” Baiwei said. “The greater your karmic merits are, the more you shall be loved by the heavens, and the greater your luck shall be. But if your sins are too great, your ‘three disasters’ and ‘nine tribulations’ will be very terrifying, and your luck will be reduced as well.”

“Killing those creatures who have committed great sins will result in the accumulation of major karmic merits,” Baiwei said with a smile. “The Raindragon Guard serves as the army of the Grand Xia Dynasty. Per the orders of the Grand Xia Dynasty, they will seek out and slay those who have committed grave sins, resulting in the karmic merits of the Grand Xia Dynasty as a whole to rise...and thus, the Grand Xia Dynasty’s fortunes will grow increasingly rosy, and its foundations will become increasingly firm.”

Ning was astonished. So the reason that the Raindragon Guards around the world pursued those who had committed grave sins...was to improve the fortune of the Grand Xia Dynasty? He had no idea, but upon being informed, it was all so simple.

“Those who have rendered karmic merits shall have a clean aura swirling about them. But for those sinners, a corrosive aura will swirl about them,” Baiwei said. “Supposedly, those with extremely high levels of karmic merit will emit a golden light, while those who have committed tremendous sins will radiate a bloody, vile light. Unfortunately, only someone who has opened the Celestial Eye will be capable of seeing it.”

Ning now understood. He himself had opened his Celestial Eye, and had noticed through his divine sense that a faint, clear aura swirled about him. So this was ‘karmic merit’. However, although he had activated his divine sense many times afterwards, he had never found any others with this clear aura around them. Clearly, it was quite difficult to reach this level of karmic merit, much less the level of emanating golden light.

“How can one accumulate sufficient karmic merits?” Ning asked. “Only by doing good deeds can one gain karmic merits, while carrying out vile deeds will result in sin. As for the details...I’m not too clear on them either,” Baiwei said. “Karmic merits and sins; all of these things are determined by the heavens. They are too complicated. However, no matter what, Immortal practitioners must not wantonly slaughter ordinary mortals. It doesn’t matter if an Immortal practitioner kills another practitioner, but if he kills mortals...then his sins will definitely accumulate. This is something my father warned me of.”

Ning was startled. Killing common mortals would result in accumulating major sin? “Thank you for your guidance, Brother Baiwei,” Ning said gratefully.

“After you join a school, you will quickly learn about the various taboos and proscriptions,” Baiwei said. “Killing common mortals is forbidden. Killing one or two is one thing, but the more you kill, the more trouble it will be. That Bei Zishan you killed? It was precisely because he murdered far too many common mortals that he was covered in sin, and thus hunted by the Raindragon Guard.”

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After this topic of conversation, Ning suddenly thought of something.

“You’ve already spoken of the Heavenly Saint Church, the Blood God Church, the Eastriver clan, the Bluewood clan, the Dragonhunter clan, the Skysplitter Sword Sect, and the Hundred Flowers Fairyland. These are seven of the major powers. Then the final one, the Black-White College; what’s that all about?”

Ning cared more about the schools. He didn’t wish to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect, and wouldn’t be permitted to join the Hundred Flowers Fairyland. The Black-White College was the only one remaining.

“The Black-White College is the most powerful of the eight major powers!” Baiwei looked towards Ning. “Most powerful?” Ning instantly grew curious. “Yes.” Baiwei’s eyes were shining. “The other seven powers are on par with each other; they are all very ancient, and their roots are deep. But the Black-White College is the true cream of the crop. In fact, the Black-White College has even produced a Celestial Immortal.”

“A Celestial Immortal?” Ning’s heart instantly began to pound. Good heavens. Although quite a few of the powers located in the Stillwater Commandery had Immortals, those were all Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals. He had never heard of any power being in possession of a Celestial Immortal.

“Right. Celestial Immortal.” Baiwei continued, “The Black-White College, at its peak of power, was once comparable to my Northmont clan of Stillwater, as well as the Raindragon Guard.”

“Countless years have passed. Although that ancient Celestial Immortal departed long ago, the Black-White College remains the strongest of the eight powers.” Baiwei laughed as he looked at Ning. “And, do you know? Of the three supreme schools, the Skysplitter Sword Sect has a headquarters that stretches a hundred thousand kilometers, the Hundred Flowers Fairyland has its own separate dimension, but the Black-White College...it is located right here in Stillwater City.”

“Stillwater City?” Ning couldn’t believe it. “Stillwater City is so small. How could a school be located here, and such a supreme school at that?”

Baiwei laughed. “That’s because this Black-White College’s members

range from Immortals to Zifu Disciples, and they only number in the hundreds. The entire Black-White College has, in total, a hundred Zifu Disciples, two hundred Wanxiang Adepts, thirty-plus Primal Daoists, and a number of Immortals who disappear and reappear randomly. Supposedly, they have at least six Immortals.”

Ning blinked. What? A hundred Zifu Disciples? Two hundred Wanxiang Adepts? There were even fewer Zifu Disciples than Wanxiang Adepts? They had a ridiculous number of Primal Daoists as well...and they had at least six Immortals! That was even more than the Skysplitter Sword Sect had!

“Now do you understand?” Baiwei looked at Ning. “The Black-White Palace has exceedingly few members. To enter it is also exceedingly difficult. Even though I think highly of you, all I can do is recommend you for entry into the Skysplitter Sword Sect. However, now that you have already reached the Dao Domain level, you are qualified to enter the Black-White Palace.”

“Only someone like me can enter it?” Ning was curious.

“The Black-White College’s name is known even in the royal capital of the Grand Xia Dynasty.” Baiwei looked at Ning. “Each year, it will accept at most three or four disciples. Sometimes, it won’t accept any at all. They only accept those who are true geniuses with unparalleled abilities to comprehend things. If one’s foundation is even slightly lacking, one won’t be able to enter. The vast majority of those who are able to enter the Black-White College are the most monstrous geniuses of the various tribes within the Stillwater Commandery. Even some of the major powers outside Stillwater Commandery will send their geniuses over in the hopes of joining the Black-White College.”

Chapter 15: Capturing Fiendgods

“The royal capital of the Grand Xia Dynasty?” Ji Ning felt a certain itchiness in his heart. He couldn’t help but immediately begin to flip through this enormous compiled intelligence report.

Northmont Baiwei, seeing how eager Ning was, laughed then said, “Intrigued? Now do you know what I saved it for last?”

Soon, Ning flipped to the relevant page regarding the Black-White College. “So actually...so it’s....” Ning, upon reading the information regarding the glorious history of the Black-White College, began to mumble to himself, his eyes shining.

“Black-White Diagram? The Black-White Bedstone Diagram?” Ning, after reading towards the end of the report, raised his head and looked towards Baiwei, his eyes filled with curiosity. “Brother Baiwei, is this Black-White Bedstone Diagram truly so incredible?”

“How could it not be?” Baiwei laughed. “After you join the Black-White College, you will personally see the Black-White Bedstone Diagram. By then, you’ll understand how miraculous it is.” Ning nodded lightly.

The Black-White Diagram was the most precious treasure of the entire Black-White College! It was an enormous sculpture that was carved into the diagram of a black-and-white bedstone. The black-and-white bedstone appeared ordinary, but in reality it was covered with complicated runes, with white and black lines crisscrossing it. It was so intricate and detailed...that the simple crisscrossings of the black and white lines created incomparably profoundness which contained many different types of Dao. It was simply unfathomable.

It allured many of the major figures from outside sects, who would come to stare at it and meditate. But of course, since this was the most sacred treasure of the Black-White College, the major figures of other powers who occasionally received a chance to view it would be given a time limit. Only the disciples of the Black-White College would be given unlimited amounts of time to meditate on it.

“My father once said,” Baiwei explained, “That the Dao is even profounder than the profound. If one wishes to comprehend it, it is like seeking a flower in a fog...while the Black-White Bedstone Diagram seems to summarize the profundities and mysteries of the countless Daos in a very detailed, expert manner. Those countless crisscrossing black and white lines...by viewing them in a different way, you will gain different insights into different mysteries. Such a marvelous item must have been born from nature itself, which naturally formed this diagram.”

The Black-White Diagram had been found by an Immortal in one of the minor worlds, who had brought it back here. By relying on the Black-White Diagram, the College had grown famous and powerful, and had even changed its name after it, becoming the Black-White College.

“I want to go for a stroll,” Ning said, rising to his feet. “Go where?” Baiwei asked. “The Black-White College,” Ning said. “Haha, you can’t resist taking a look?” Baiwei laughed. “Only when I see it with my own eyes will I have a better grasp of whether or not I will choose to join this Black-White College.” Ning was indeed quite eager to see this Black-White College; after all, every single disciple of a school such as this could be described as a unparalleled genius. Ning was naturally quite eager to see what this place, a gathering spot for supreme geniuses, was like.

“Come, I’ll accompany you.” Baiwei rose to his feet as well.

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Ning, Baiwei, the Whitewater Hound, and that golem maidservant walked together within the estate, heading towards the outside. “Eh?” Baiwei suddenly noticed several distant figures from the corner of his eyes.

It was his father, Northmont Blacktiger, and that triangle-pupiled old man, along with a third, tall, skinny man. “Xuan Six?” Baiwei frowned, musing to himself. “Why has Six returned to the estate? Can something major have occurred?”

As the only child of Blacktiger, Baiwei naturally knew many secrets. He instantly recognized that tall, skinny man.

“What is it?” Ning asked. “Nothing. Let’s go to the Black-White College,”

Baiwei laughed. "We're in no hurry today. Let's just walk." "Alright." Ning laughed, then followed Baiwei out.

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Blacktiger and the old triangle-pupiled servant just stood there, listening to the report from that tall, skinny man – Xuan Six. The triangle-pupiled old man glanced sideways, noting the distant Baiwei and Ning.

"After discovering his whereabouts, we did everything we could to set down an all-encompassing net. In the end, we finally captured that Primordial Fiendgod. We captured him alive!" The tall, skinny man spoke with great respect. "Our side lost a squad, a Primal Daoist, and twelve Wanxiang Adepts."

"Mm. Well done." Blacktiger nodded, his deep, abyssal eyes flashing faintly with lightning. "And where has this Fiendgod been imprisoned?" Blacktiger asked. "In the second 'Kun' trigram character," the tall man replied respectfully.

Blacktiger nodded gently. "You can leave now." "Yes." The tall, skinny Xuan Six immediately, quietly slipped away.

The nearby triangle-pupiled servant hurriedly whispered, "Congratulations and felicitations, master. You caught a Primordial Fiendgod alive." Blacktiger responded in a low voice, "Let's first see what sort of Fiendgod it is, how strong it is, and what divine abilities it is skilled in. These Primordial Fiendgods have been able to struggle at death's doorstep and survive to this era; none of them are easy to deal with. Even the weakest of them...might have others of the same race in hiding. No matter what, we have to take a look. Come, let's leave the city."

"Alright." The triangle-pupiled old servant replied with respect, and soon...

Whoosh! A wave of black energy appeared. Eight black divine dragons, pulling a carriage behind them, flew out from the Northmont Blacktiger Estate, flying directly into the heavens, finally disappearing into the skies above Stillwater City.

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Ning and Baiwei, by contrast, were quite relaxed. The two strolled through the incomparably wide streets, moving a kilometer with each blink of the eye. The Whitewater Hound and the maidservant were able to effortlessly keep up.

“Here we are. The Black-White College is up ahead,” Baiwei said, pointing towards the front. The two quickly came to a halt. Ning lifted his head, staring straight ahead. Up ahead was an enormous edifice, the main gates three hundred meters tall and nearly six hundred meters wide. The main gates had three characters inscribed onto it – ‘Black-White College’. In addition, in the center of these characters, there was a complicated black-and-white diagram of a bedstone.

“The Black-White Bedstone Diagram?” Ning took a look, and as he did, he could sense infinite mysteries contained within it...but when he took a closer inspection, he felt as though they were all blurred, and that he couldn’t get a clear grasp on them.

“Those characters in front of the Black-White College, along with that bedstone diagram, were left behind by that Celestial Immortal to the Black-White College.” Baiwei explained, “It isn’t the true Black-White Bedstone Diagram; the true Black-White Bedstone Diagram is far larger than this one, and far more complicated.”

“So that’s how it is.” Ning nodded. On the second floor of the main gate of the Black-White College, there was an enormous inky-jade stone sculpture of a lion, as well as the inky-jade stone sculpture of a divine dragon. They stood at each side of the bedstone, with many soldiers in the nearby area as well.

“Those soldiers belong to my Marquisate of Stillwater,” Baiwei said. “They’ve been sent here to help guard this place. That lion and that divine dragon? They are the true gate guards for the Black-White College.”

“Them? Guards?” Ning was astonished. Even with his vision, he hadn’t been able to tell that the stone lion and the stone dragon were guardians.

“These are two constructs which the Black-White College purchased

from the Bluewood clan at enormous cost,” Baiwei explained. “Supposedly, these two constructs have close to an Immortal’s power, and they have intelligence no lower than an ordinary person’s. They have already stood guard here for countless years.”

Ning was speechless. Constructs? That were close to Immortals in power?

“Blackcurrent!” Baiwei suddenly called out in a high voice. “Baiwei!” From within the Black-White College, a white-robed youth who was leading a group of followers laughed in surprise.

Baiwei immediately sent mentally to the nearby Ning, “This person is named Northmont Blackcurrent. He, too, is a member of our Northmont clan of Stillwater. However, he’s from an extremely distant branch of the family. Although his talent was exceptional, he wasn’t viewed as being very important. Afterwards, however, he actually was able to successfully enter the Black-White College. His status within our Northmont clan instantly rose dramatically.”

“Oh?” Ning looked at the white-clothed youth with surprise.

“Still, be careful of this person. This person is extremely good at putting on false pretenses. My father once said...this Northmont Blackcurrent is a viper dressed in a sheepskin. You cannot let yourself grow too close to this sort of person, but there’s no need to create any grudges between you either.” This was what Baiwei sent to Ning.

Ning nodded. A viper dressed in a sheepskin?

The Northmont clan of Stillwater had managed to last from the Fiendgod era to the modern era. One could imagine how many members it had. Some of the more distant branches...probably wouldn’t have statuses that were much higher than that of the Ji clan’s. Only if they produced a supreme genius would the Marquisate of Stillwater value them.

“This person had probably been stifled terribly in the past, and so his personality became distorted.” This was what Ning guessed.

“Baiwei, why have you come?” Blackcurrent laughed. “I brought my good

friend, Ji Ning, to come take a look,” Baiwei replied. “Brother Ji Ning also wishes to enter this Black-White College.”

Ning spoke out: “It is extremely hard to enter the Black-White College. I just want to give it a try.”

Northmont Blackcurrent glanced at Ning. He instantly felt a hint of dislike towards him! His experiences in his youth had caused him to view all of the members of the primary lineage of the Northmont clan, all those exalted young masters, with extreme jealousy and dislike! Thus, he now easily began to view Ning as being on Northmont Baiwei’s side.

“Oh. Even though you might fail, you should still make an attempt,” Blackcurrent said with a laugh. He looked at Ning...but a hint of pity was in his gaze. “You might be lucky. You might get in. By then, we will be fellow disciples.”

Ning could sense that this Blackcurrent had an arrogant, lofty demeanor about him. Clearly, as Blackcurrent saw it, he himself was an unparalleled genius. As for this Ji Ning? Since he had come alongside Baiwei, Ji Ning’s status was extraordinary, but what of it? What the Black-White College cared about was a person’s innate talent and comprehension ability.

“Baiwei, I can’t stay here for too long. I have business. Let’s have a good chat, sometime in the future.” Blackcurrent clasped his hands, then led his group away. Every member of this group had an extraordinary demeanor. Based on what Ning could sense, it seemed as though all of these followers were Immortal cultivators.

“What’s going on with those followers?” Ning asked. “Didn’t you say that he is an ordinary member of a distant branch of your Northmont clan? Why are there so many Immortal practitioners following him?”

Baiwei shook his head. “Every single disciple of the Black-White College is an unparalleled genius. You can’t expect them to all do everything for themselves, can you? Thus, the Black-White College will permit every single formal disciple to accept ten retainers. Thus, although the Black-White College only has a few hundred disciples, it has thousands of retainers.”

“These thousands of retainers will act on behalf of the Black-White College, and they can also go listen to the Primal Daoists, or perhaps even the Immortals, expound on the Dao. They can also be gifted with Ki Refining techniques. If there is a particularly talented person amongst them, they might even be promoted to the rank of full disciple. But of course, it’s rare for even a single retainer to be promoted to full disciple, even after a hundred years. The Black-White College’s requirements for its full disciples are quite strict, after all. Still, no matter what, to be a retainer in the Black-White College is better than going to be an ordinary disciple in an ordinary school,” Baiwei said. “Thus, many Immortal practitioners are willing to go be retainers.”

Ning nodded. Formidable. By accepting retainers, these genius disciples essentially formed their own coteries! This helped make the Black-White College more stable as well.

“However, this fellow clansman of mine, Blackcurrent, seems to not hold you in particularly high regard, Brother Ji Ning,” Baiwei said. “When the time comes, after you enter the Black-White College, the look on his face will be priceless.”

Ning laughed. “My mind is settled!” Baiwei was startled. “Are you saying...?”

“At the twelfth lunar month, I will enter this Black-White College.” Ning raised his head, staring towards the words left behind by that Celestial Immortal.

Black-White College...this was the place where he would begin his sudden rise to prominence!

Chapter 16: The Twelfth Lunar Month, Entering a School

Time passed, and in the blink of an eye, the twelfth lunar month arrived. The first to the third days of the twelfth lunar month were the days which many of the schools located in Stillwater City would accept disciples.

“Wow.” Meng Xin, Meng Jun, and Meng Roch walked out of an alley, arriving at the main street. “There are so many people here,” Meng Xin breathed in amazement. Meng Jun said, his expression exuberant, “That goes without saying. Today is the first day of the twelfth lunar month, the very first day in which one can join a school. There are countless people in Stillwater City who will join a school today. There are ordinary mortals, Xiantian lifeforms, and also Zifu Disciples like us! However, those top-tier schools generally will only accept early Zifu stage experts! We are all early Zifu stage experts; it should be much easier for us to join a school.”

Meng Xin secretly gave the nearby Meng Roch a sideways glance. Previously, when the Snowdragon Mountain experts had ambushed them, Roch had executed a forbidden technique in order to save her. This had resulted in damage to his cultivation base, and it would now be much harder for him to join a school.

“Little Sister Xin, let’s go,” Jun said. Suddenly, he gave the nearby Roch a sidelong glance, and then a look of amusement appear on his face. “Rocky, although your cultivation foundation was damaged, you are still an early stage Zifu Disciple. If you are lucky, perhaps you’ll encounter some schools that didn’t investigate too carefully, and you’ll still be able to join them.”

Roch found it hard to hide the anger from his face. What did Jun mean by ‘didn’t investigate too carefully’? Accepting new disciples was something which determined a school’s future. Which school was careless in doing this?

“Oho, you are angry.” Jun let out a snicker, then turned and left.

“Big Brother Rocky.” Meng Xin couldn’t help but call out to him, but Roch said in a low voice, “You two can go. I’ll go by myself to try out some schools.” Xin hesitated, then said, “Big Brother Rocky, I’ll go with you. Let’s go join a school together.”

Roch couldn’t help but feel surprised and delighted. But right at this moment, Jun, who had already walked quite far away, turned and called out to Xin, “Little Sister Xin!” Xin stood there by Roch’s side. “I’ll stay with Big Brother Rocky,” she said. This caused a hint of excitement to appear on Roch’s face.

Jun stared. “You’ll go with him? How can he possibly enter any decent school?” Xin replied, “When Big Brother Rocky used that forbidden technique, he saved your life as well. And you actually treat him like this? I won’t go with you.”

Because she was both beautiful and talented since she was a child, Xin had always been doted on. Thus, she had a bit of a spoiled streak. Although she slightly looked down on both Roch and Jun, she still felt very grateful towards Roch for having rescued her life on the journey over. As for Jun...Xin naturally now held Meng Jun in great contempt, due to the way he treated his savior.

“You...” Jun stared. “Hmph.” Xin just snorted coldly. Jun turned and left. As he did, he said, “You just wait and see. I want to see what sort of a school you two will end up joining.”

Meng Xin turned to look towards Meng Roch. “Big Brother Rocky, let’s go.” As for Roch, a blazing fire was in his heart, and so he followed Xin forward. The two would try to join a school on their own.

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West Stillwater. Northmont Blacktiger’s Estate.

“Brother Baiwei, no need to send me off,” Ji Ning laughed. Northmont Baiwei laughed as well. “Then I’ll wait for your good news, Ji Ning.” Ning clasped his hands, then turned and left, taking his Whitewater Hound with him as he headed directly towards the Black-White College.

The recent days he had spent in Northmont Blacktiger's Estate had all been quite calm and peaceful. Ning had learned through Baiwei that in recent days, thanks to the power he had displayed in the Carefree Caverns, there had indeed been quite a few schools which had sent people to the Estate with the goal of having Ning join them.

All of them had made extremely good offers. Some offered an Immortal as his master; others offered five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence; still others had prepared a Heaven-ranked magic treasure for him.

Many offers had been made, and these offers were good enough to make even a Primal Daoist envious. In terms of value, there weren't at all inferior to the entire value of the elemental ore mine that had been discovered in the Ji clan's territory. Unfortunately, the Skysplitter Sword Sect wasn't amongst them, nor the Black-White College.

Of the three major schools that were amongst the eight great powers of Stillwater Commandery, the Hundred Flowers Fairyland only accepted female disciples, while the Skysplitter Sword Sect was extremely proud and wouldn't go recruit disciples. As for the Black-White College, of course it would never, ever proactively reach out to potential disciples.

"Those schools are all much weaker than the three major schools. The Ki Refining techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts they have to offer are all on a lower level as well." Ning shook his head. This lower level represented a difference that was as great as that between the heavens and the earth. The more top-tier a Ki Refining technique was, the better a chance one would have of becoming an Immortal.

Moments later. "Here we are." Ning raised his head, staring towards the distant Black-White College. The Whitewater Hound looked at it as well.

"There really are quite a lot of people here today," Ning sighed. The Whitewater Hound sent mentally towards him, "This Black-White College is extremely exacting in its standards for taking on new disciples. Ning, son, don't be careless and end up eliminated."

"Don't worry, Uncle White." Ning nodded.

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Today, the gates to the Black-White College were wide open. People were allowed to freely enter, and Ning entered, the Whitewater Hound by his side. Within the thronging masses of people present were the various Immortal cultivators who wished to enter the Black-White College.

“Father, I will definitely work hard. I’ll enter the Black-White College at one try.”

“The Black-White College. I’ll definitely enter!”

“I will definitely become a disciple of the Black-White College. Sister Ru promised that she would be my wife if I succeed.”

All of the Immortal cultivators were gritting their teeth. Near them, many spirit-beasts, servants, family members, and friends were present as well. “There has to be thousands of people here,” Ning said to himself, speechless.

From up ahead, an angry voice rang out. “Why have you, a middle stage Ki Refiner, come to my Black-White College? Hurry up and leave. Everyone who wishes to enter our Black-White College, listen up; you must be an early stage Ki Refiner. Our Black-White College will only accept early stage Ki Refiners! If you aren’t an early stage Ki Refiner, hurry up and leave, unless you want to listen to me curse at you. NEXT!”

“Mmm. The toughness of your meridian channels is insufficient. Begone. NEXT!”

“You’ve used a forbidden technique, and you still have come to my Black-White College? Scram! NEXT!”

“Your meridian channels are insufficiently wide. Begone. NEXT!”

“Mmm. You barely qualify. Go inside and wait.”

Ning heard every single evaluation with perfect clarity. Hearing the voice ring out from far away, he couldn’t help but feel surprised. The vast majority had been eliminated, just based on their physical qualifications. From this, one could tell how strict the standards were.

A short time later. Ning moved closer to the front, and he saw the scene happening up ahead. There was a lake in the distance, and above the lake there was a boat with a black-haired middle-aged man seated on it. The man sat there, holding a flagon of wine, appearing quite relaxed. An enormous bronze mirror hung there in the air above him, and it shone down towards the Immortal practitioners that flew towards the man.

“Greetings, senior.” A young man flew forward, standing atop the water without sinking down. Rumble...the light of the bronze mirror shone down upon him. “Mm. You just barely qualify. Go inside and wait,” the black-haired, middle-aged man said casually.

“Thank you, senior.” The young man instantly walked forward atop the water, moving at high speed across the lake and arriving at the opposite end of it. There were tens of young men and women waiting there already, as well as a few youths.

One Immortal cultivator after another was eliminated, and they all had to return to the side of the shore from whence they had come. As for those who passed, they all flew to the other shore.

Yet another graceful young master glided towards the top of the lake. Cupping his hands, he said, “Meng Tang greets you yet again, senior.” The giant bronze mirror shone down on him from above, and the black-haired, middle-aged man revealed a rare hint of a satisfied smile. “Go in.” Meng Tang bowed modestly, then flew to the other shore.

“Uncle White. Wait here for me.” Ning looked at the Whitewater Hound by his side, then sent him a mental message. The Whitewater Hound nodded. Swoosh! Ning’s figure flickered, and he too appeared atop the lake. Clasping his hands, he said, “My respects to you, senior.”

“He’s dressed in animal furs?” “This young man is dressed in animal furs? How rare.” “I wonder where he came from.” “He looks quite young...I imagine he must be quite talented.” The spectators were all chatting amongst themselves.

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Ning, however, was quite calm. Although some of those people looked

down on his animal fur clothes, these clothes were a perfect copy of the fur clothes his mother had personally sown for him. When he wore these furs, he felt incomparably comfortable, as though his mother was right there by his side. As for the actual fur clothes his mother had sown, he couldn't bear to wear them, for fear of wearing them out. He kept them safely hidden away.

The black-haired, middle-aged man on the boat gave Ning a glance. "Move faster. No need to put on airs." The bronze mirror in the sky shone down towards Ning as well.

"Hrm?" Ning suddenly had a strange feeling, as though this light had penetrated through his skin, flesh, and bones throughout his body. "Eh? A Fiendgod Body Refiner?" The black-haired, middle-aged man gave Ning a surprised glance, then nodded in satisfaction. "Your talent isn't bad. And you've already reached the Zifu level as a Fiendgod as well, and seemingly in a very perfect manner. What technique do you train in?"

"The [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram]!" Ning gave a direct response, and his words instantly elicited surprised cries.

"The [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram]?"

"The legendary number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique? Someone was actually able to train to the Zifu level in it?"

"He appears to be simply a youth...it really is true that the younger an Immortal cultivator appears, the more one must be wary of them. For him to be able to successfully train in the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] at such a young age...formidable, formidable."

"There really are quite a few geniuses that have come to join the Black-White College. I came very early in the morning, and this is now the second person I have seen here who trains in the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] and is at the Zifu level."

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Ning's ears twitched. Oh? He wasn't the only one here who had successfully trained in the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram]?

“Mm.” The black-haired, middle-aged man nodded with a smile. “Go. Still, you must not be the slightest bit careless. Perhaps you might be able to enter my College after all.” Ning bowed, his heart filled with surprise. “Thank you, senior.”

It seemed as though the Black-White College’s requirements for accepting new disciples truly were exacting. Even someone at the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram]... only ‘might’ have a chance at entering? Still, the Black-White College attracted the interest of all of the supreme talents of Stillwater Commandery, and even some of the supreme geniuses outside of Stillwater Commandery would come here. Each year, they would at most select three or four disciples, or perhaps none at all!

Just by relying on the fact that Ning was at the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram], he could probably easily enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect. But it was incredibly difficult to become one of the very few disciples of the Black-White College!

Swoosh! Ning moved forward, and it was as though he was one with the water under his feet. Quite easily and simply, he flashed across the surface of the water, arriving on the opposite shore.

“Fifth Bro, yet another practitioner of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] has come.” A youth was currently speaking to a black-clothed youth next to him. The black-clothed youth gave Ning a glance, and Ning glanced back at him.

“What stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] have you reached?” The black-clothed youth asked. But Ning just turned his head, not even glancing at him.

The black-clothed youth frowned. Within his clan, he was viewed as a peerless, heaven-favored genius. He was used to being pampered. Moreover, he had reached the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram], and was now at the Blood-Drop Rebirth level of power. He, too, had decided to join the Black-White College. He was accustomed to not holding others of the same generation with any regard, and by

relying on his divine ability, he was even able to fight those at a higher level. Naturally, he was an extremely proud man.

“Hmph. He doesn’t know his place.” The black-clothed youth gave Ning a glance, then paid him no more attention. As for Ning, he chose a large rock, then sat down atop it in the lotus position. He couldn’t be bothered to notice that black-clothed youth.

As time passed on, the number of young men and women nearby grew more and more numerous. Some were from major tribes, and there were even those from outside Stillwater Commandery. Even members of the Northmont clan of Stillwater had come. Ning occasionally would glance at them, but he wouldn’t engage any of them in conversation. He knew that of the people in front of him, most likely at most one or two would actually be able to enter the Black-White College.

Chapter 17: Myriad Thunderbolts Launched Together

Time passed, and in the blink of an eye, it was sunset. By now, only the silhouette of half the sun could be seen.

“Today, things will end here. Those who wish to join my Black-White College, please come early tomorrow morning.” The black-haired middle-aged man on the boat within the lake waved his hand as he spoke, and the bronze mirror in the air above him rapidly began to shrink to the size of a palm as it landed towards his hand. After that, the ship automatically began to move towards the other side of the lake.

The man stored away the ship, then disembarked. He looked at the thronging masses of youths, then nodded slightly. “Those who are confident in themselves will generally come on the first day to apply for entry. The majority of those who were accepted by my Black-White College all came on the first day.”

“A total of 962 of you have passed the preliminary selection process on the first day, but the number of which you who will truly be able to join my Black-White College can be counted on one hand. Thus, all of you must be incomparably cautious. You must put forth your full effort.”

“Yes.” The nine hundred plus selectees all responded in unison. The black-haired man nodded. “Mm. Follow me.” Turning, he walked away.

Instantly, this group of young Immortal practitioners all moved to follow him. Ning turned to glance backwards, and he saw that on the other side of the lake, there were quite a few people still waiting quietly. These should most likely be the family, friends, and servants of the selectees. There was also a large Whitewater Hound who stood there, quietly staring towards this side.

.....

The Black-White College, located within Stillwater City, took up an area with a circumference of roughly nine hundred kilometers. Amongst the

various Immortal practitioner schools, this was definitely one of the smaller ones. Still, nine hundred kilometers...in his past life on Earth, one of the trillion minor worlds, it would be comparable to a local county. As for Stillwater City, the very heart of Stillwater Commandery and a place where countless powerful experts gathered, it was larger than entire countries back on Earth.

Given that it was roughly comparable to a county in size, strictly speaking, the Black-White College couldn't be described as 'small' per se. And within the Black-White College, there was even a small mountain range.

Ning and the rest of his group, under the guidance of the black-haired man, quickly advanced more than a hundred kilometers, arriving within a gorge. "Halt," the black-haired man said. The nine hundred plus individuals all came to a halt.

"Arise," the black-haired man suddenly barked.

Rumble...

This wide, spacious gorge had a perimeter of many kilometers. Suddenly, from far away, a curtain of clear water could be seen, which had formed into an enormous grand sealing formation. This grand sealing formation was extraordinary large; not only did it cover the entire gorge, it even covered several of the nearby mountain peaks. Naturally, the nine hundred plus selectees were trapped within it as well.

"Rumble..." "Rumble..." "Rumble..." Multiple mechanical noises rang out. From within one of the caverns within the region covered by the grand sealing formation, multiple giant shadows suddenly flew out. 810 of these shadows flew out consecutively, halting in midair.

These were 810 dragon heads, all of which had their mouths open wide as they stared down below.

"A grand construct formation." "A grand formation formed from more than 810 constructs!" Some of the nine hundred plus Immortal cultivators below instantly began to call out, quite a few of their faces ashen.

Swoosh! The black-haired middle-aged man charged into the skies, flying to the top of those 810 dragon heads. At the same time, five additional figures flew out from the cave next to him, each with powerful auras. There were a total of six figures, including the black-haired man; five men, one woman. All of them stared downwards.

“Listen up,” the black-haired man barked. “Afterwards, the grand golem formation will launch attacks...what all of you need to do is endure the attacks and charge into the skies, and to arrive at this cavern by my side. You have as much time as it takes for a stick of incense to finish burning. If you do so, that means you’ve succeeded. But if no one manages to reach this cave before the stick of incense is burnt up, that means none of you are qualified to join my Black-White College!”

Some of the nine hundred plus youths below were confident, while others were nervous. Still others just waited quietly.

“Hiss.” A stick of incense appeared out of nowhere within the black-haired man’s hands, and then it was immediately set alight. At the same time, those 810 dragon head’s simultaneously began to glow with a dazzling azure light, and then, from the mouth of every single dragon head shot out rays of azure lightning. The sound was thunderous! Boom! Boom! Boom! One bolt of lightning after another rained down upon them.

It was as though ten thousand bolts of lightning were descending at the same time!

“It begins now!” The black-haired man barked at them.

.....

Given that the dragon heads had begun to vomit lightning, and that the stick of incense had already been lit, everyone knew that it had begun.

“Charging into that cave won’t be easy.” Ning raised his head, giving it a glance. In his heart, he instantly realized that because the 810 dragon heads were next to the side of the cave, if one wished to enter it, one would have to fly directly past those 810 dragon heads...which were constantly raining thunderbolts downwards towards them.

Down below, given how much space there was, each person wouldn't have to face too many thunderbolts. But the closer one flew towards the cave, the more tightly packed the thunderbolts would be.

"Bang!" Ning, wielding his Darknorth Swords, chopped directly towards one of the encroaching thunderbolts. The Darknorth Swords were filled with elemental ki, and were capable of blocking lightning.

"So powerful." Ning felt his hands tremble violently. "The power of this lightning is significant."

"Up!" "Let's go!" "Charge!"

Instantly, multiple figures mounted their magic treasures and, in unison, charged towards the sky. But the farther up they went, the more thunderbolts awaited them. They were only able to hold on for a few breaths, making it halfway up, then were knocked downwards by the dense rain of thunderbolts, forced to land again.

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The six Primal Daoists of the Black-White College who were above the dragon heads watched on, chatting and laughing amongst themselves. "Everyone, of these youths, how many do you think will enter the caves?" A middle-aged man with a long beard laughed as he asked this question.

A short, chubby, bald man chortled. "Perhaps not even a single one." "It shouldn't be that bad," a white-robed woman said with a laugh. "There should at least be three or four who can enter the cave. Look, there's someone charging upwards. She shouldn't be too weak."

Instantly, the other Primal Daoists turned to look carefully. A black-clothed woman was charging into the skies, her body surrounded by multiple tendrils. When the lightning bolts struck against her, the tendrils and vines would actively go block the lightning, defending against one bolt after another.

Soon, she made it to the halfway point, and moved closer and closer towards the formation of dragon heads. "Half of the grand golem formation." The black-haired, middle-aged man suddenly spoke softly, and

instantly, of the 810 dragon heads, 405 of them focused on that black-clothed woman.

Instantly, thousands of bolts of lightning wildly, completely focused on that black-clothed woman. Although those tendrils and vines struggled ferociously, they weren't able to do anything. BOOM! Vines and tendrils exploded, and the black-clothed woman fell down from the skies.

"She couldn't even withstand half." The black-clothed, middle-aged man shook his head. The white-robed woman shook her head as well. "She can't be considered a true genius."

.....

Ning was in no rush to charge forward. He watched for a period of time first. He watched as that black-clothed youth who also trained in the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] charged upwards. As that youth moved extremely close to the formation of dragon heads, he suddenly suffered the attack of every single dragon head. As the youth slammed to the ground, Ning understood everything.

"At the very bottom, you only have to meet an occasional bolt of lightning. The higher up you go, the more bolts will strike you. If you pass the halfway point, you will suffer an attack from half of the dragon heads. And, when you are extremely close, you will suffer mass attacks from all the dragon heads."

"You have to be able to withstand the full might of all of the dragon heads in order to enter the cavern. At such short range...even if two or three people joined forces, upon suffering the full brunt of the attacks of the dragon heads, whether or not they work together becomes of little importance." Ning understood this principle. When they were extremely close to the dragon heads, the amount of space for maneuvering was too small. The myriad thunderbolts would form a nearly complete, solid attack. A web of lightning would completely surround that entire region, and to pass, one would have to charge through. There were no shortcuts around it!

"Charge!" After making sure that there were no other oddities, Ning's

body instantly became surrounded by six full layers of Waterflame Loti. At the same time, a flying sword appeared beneath his feet, and he immediately controlled the sword to soar into the skies.

“Let’s go!” “Charge!” At virtually the same instant Ning flew upwards, eight other figures charged upwards as well. These had all been watching silently. After seeing how the black-clothed man had, in the end, suffered attacks from all the dragon heads...they all realized that there were no shortcuts to be taken, and so had decided to charge.

“Charge!” The black-clothed man, who had fallen down halfway, gritted his teeth upon seeing the others charge upwards. He, too, flew upwards yet again.

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The 810 dragon heads were clustered in one location, quite close to the cave. To enter this cave, one would have to pass through the center of them...which ensured that one would have to face all 810 attacks.

The Six Primal Daoists stared downwards, watching. “This fellows are all quite spirited. None of them are holding back now.” The black-haired, middle-aged man laughed. “Everyone, who do you think will pass?”

“That fellow controlling the Azure Dragon construct.” The white-clothed woman’s eyes lit up as she stared at a white-clothed youth who stood atop an Azure Dragon. This white-robed youth was clearly quite young; there was still a hint of youthful shyness on his face, but the Azure Dragon construct under his control was incomparably nimble, occasionally dodging while knocking aside the bolts of lightning at other times.

“Within this grand sealing formation of ours, one can only use a golem or construct which one personally made.” The white-clothed woman continued, “Look at how he controls that construct. He’s at the level where it is like controlling part of his body; he is the construct, and the construct is him. He is absolutely a genius of the Dao of Constructs.”

“Mm.” “Right.” “Formidable.” The others all nodded and assented. These Primal Daoists were no ordinary Primal Daoists; they were the Primal Daoists of Black-White College. All of them were naturally extraordinary

figures, and their judgment was impeccable. They could instantly tell that this white-clothed youth had astonishing talent in the Dao of Constructs.

“What do you think of the others?” The black-haired, middle-aged man laughed.

“The others?” “I don’t see anyone particularly outstanding.” “They are average.”

These Primal Daoists all had extremely high standards; although all of the others, Ning included, had displayed formidable abilities, there was nothing which could make these Primal Daoists feel surprised.

“Hahaha.” The black-haired, middle-aged man instantly began to laugh loudly. “All of you bury yourselves in training. We’ve asked you to come this time to organize the acceptance of new disciples, but you aren’t aware of many things. As for this old Daoist...I collect news from everywhere, and know that there is a true genius in this group. Look over there; that fur-clad youth whose body is surrounded by those blooming loti of fire and water.”

“Him?” The other five Primal Daoists looked over. The white-clothed woman said, “Although his loti of fire and water is quite marvelous, it can’t be described as astonishing. What about him?” And indeed, the other Primal Daoists didn’t understand either.

The black-haired man laughed. “He is dressed in furs, can create lotus flowers of fire and water, and uses a sword...nine out of ten says that he is that youth, Ji Ning, of the Carefree Caverns. A young, early stage Zifu Disciple who has already gained insight into a Dao Domain.”

“Gained insight into a Dao Domain?” The other five Primal Daoists were all shocked, and they all lowered their heads, looking towards Ning, who had seemed so ordinary and unremarkable.

Chapter 18: Ji Ning and Mu Northson

Ten thousand thunderbolts shot down simultaneously, crashing down towards the figures below. Those Immortal cultivators, in turn, all flew for the skies, each displaying their own abilities. Layers of golden light appeared around some of their bodies, while others had illusory divine dragons appear about them. In this situation, the Waterflame Loti swirling around Ning's body truly wasn't that special.

“Go.”

“Go.”

A white-clothed youth was currently standing atop an Azure Dragon construct. The Azure Dragon coiled about, its body occasionally lashing out while its sharp claws swept out in each direction. Even its draconic tail whipped about. For now, not a single bolt of lightning was capable of drawing close to him.

“Azure Dragon Swings Its Tail.”

“Azure Dragon Flies Skyward.”

The white-clothed youth was gently mumbling a few words every so often, his eyes blazing with heat. Clearly, he was completely lost in controlling his Azure Dragon construct, and he appeared to be incomparably excited.

“Half the construct formation, focus.” The black-haired, middle-aged man hovering high in the air gave the order. Instantly, more than four hundred of the dragon head constructs began to focus their lightning bolts down towards Ning and the others who were charging skywards.

“Awesome, wonderful, incredible!” The white-clothed youth grew increasingly excited. The Azure Dragon construct he controlled was displaying all of its unique points and releasing tremendous amounts of combat power. It was able to effortlessly block all of the oncoming bolts of lightning.

“Bang!” With but a twist of its tail, multiple lightning bolts were knocked

aside by the dragon, but Ning was right by its side. The Waterflame Loti swirled around Ning, who had the Darknorth Swords in his two hands. Those lightning bolts, despite being able to pass through the protective Waterflame Loti, were easily blocked by Ning's two swords.

Ning's sword light flashed forward like water, moving with ease and grace as he blocked all of the bolts of lightning. "Eh?" Ning's face changed. Three bolts of lightning had suddenly attacked him, and they were too close. They instantly arrived, catching Ning, who had been unprepared, completely off-guard.

"Watertight." Ning's swords instantly changed directions, hurriedly moving to block those lightning bolts. At the same time, Ning couldn't help but give that white-clothed youth close to him a glance. Just now, he had been affected by the actions of that youth.

The white-clothed youth was currently looking towards Ning as well, and a look of embarrassment was on his face. He hurriedly sent, "I'm ashamed, I'm ashamed. It was accidental."

Seeing how the white-clothed youth was sending a mental message, even at a critical time like this, Ning actually felt kindly disposed to him. He sent back, "No worries."

"I'll be more careful in the future," the white-robed youth sent back. "Just be careful. We're about to face the combined attacks of all those constructs," Ning said with a laugh.

The two were both able to converse mentally at a time like this; clearly, they still had energy to spare. They continued to fly higher!

The outlines of the dragon heads up above them grew increasingly clear. The 810 dragon heads were clustered together quite tightly, and of the group that had charged up alongside them, two had already been struck down. Only eight figures were able to continue to fly upwards.

"The entire construct formation, focus!" The black-haired, middle-aged man gave the order once again.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Instantly, it was as though the skies had shattered and the earth had collapsed. All of the dragon heads focused their attacks on a single area, and for a moment, it seemed as though the entire world was filled with lightning bolts. Every inch of the surrounding area seemed to be filled with azure bolts of lightning; clearly, they had completely saturated the area.

“Waterflame Loti!” Ning’s eyes flashed with a fierce look, and one layer after another of Waterflame Loti began to manifest around him. Whenever one layer was damaged, a new one would be born. As for the two swords in Ning’s hands, they flashed about, filling the area around Ning with sword light. Not a single bolt of lightning was capable of penetrating Ning’s swordplay defense.

“Charge!”

In an instant, Ning managed to pass through this saturated field of attacks.

Swish! As he charged through the heavens and past the formation of dragon heads, Ning was now able to clearly see, with a single glance, the six Primal Daoists who were watching this event.

“Rumble...” An incomparably dominating Azure Dragon charged into the heavens, also moving past the dragon head formation. The white-clothed youth atop the Azure Dragon, seeing that Ning had charged out as well, revealed a hint of a friendly smile towards Ning.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Ning immediately flew towards the cave, and the white-clothed youth also flew over, then stored away his construct.

“Bang!” “Clash!” “Boom!” Continuous sounds of explosions could be heard, with furious roars mixed in. Three more figures charged past the saturated field of lightning and into the cave.

The cave was many tens of meters wide. The white-robed youth walked forward alongside Ning. “My name is Mu Northson. I truly am embarrassed for what happened earlier. My mastery over my craft was insufficient, and I ended up harming you, fellow Daoist.”

“My name is Ji Ning.” Ning smiled towards him as well. “You can’t be

blamed. You were trying to enter the school, just like me. How could you be careless?" The white-clothed youth hurriedly nodded.

Ning could clearly sense that this white-clothed youth seemed slightly immature. By the looks of him, he was even younger than Ning himself. Most likely, he had reached the Xiantian level even before Ning had. He immediately asked, "Brother Mu, I'm sixteen years of age this year. How old are you?"

"Fourteen." The white-clothed youth, Mu Northson, gave an honest response. Instantly, the other three youths who had charged into the cave had changed looks on their faces. The three of them looked towards Ning and Northson with incomparably complicated looks on their faces. Monster...monsters! One was sixteen, while the other was fourteen! How young were they? And yet, these two had actually broken through the lightning construct formation before everyone else.

The black-clothed man even had some injuries on his body. He gave Ning a hard look. "This person named Ji Ning is only sixteen, but he's already at the Zifu level in terms of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram]. In addition, he was actually able to charge in with ease. I had to make two attempts before succeeding."

Earlier, he had been the first to try to charge in, but had ended up failing on his first attempt. It was only after seeing him fail did Ji Ning and the others make their charge.

He had immediately charged in behind Ning, and then followed the Azure Dragon construct of the white-robed youth, Northson, in charging past. With the Azure Dragon construct blocking some of the lightning, things had been slightly easier for him. Still, it had only been slightly easier; he still suffered an injury in order to enter.

"It truly was hard." The white-clothed youth, Northson, glanced downwards, then sighed, "This grand lightning construct formation truly was hard to pass through. The Black-White College really lives up to its reputation."

Ning looked downwards as well. Below them, the other Immortal

cultivators were still continuing to charge upwards, time and time again. “It is hard,” Ning agreed softly. “However, the vast region controlled by the Stillwater Commandery holds many geniuses.”

Swoosh!

Yet another figure passed through the blocking field of lightning. Slashing forward in a lonely arc, it landed at the entrance to the cave. This was a violet-robed maiden whose face was like the frost and the snow. Judging from the look in her eyes...clearly, she had been arrogant since she was a child. Still, every single person who was able to enter the cave was a true talent.

A few moments later. “The time has come to an end.” The black-haired, middle-aged man spoke out in a high voice, and instantly, the 810 dragon heads came to a halt. Those Immortal cultivators who were in midair still wanted to fly upwards, but...

“All of you, go down!” The black-haired man gave a sudden roar, and his eyes instantly became terrifying to behold. A terrifyingly powerful divine sense swept downwards, and instantly, all of the Immortal cultivators who had wanted to fly upwards came to a halt. And then, all of them began to drop downwards.

“Divine sense?” Ning’s eyes lit up as he saw this. “A divine sense attack!” When those Immortal cultivators had been hit by the attack, their gazes had turned dim, and then they had fallen out from the skies. Clearly, their souls had been impacted by the attack.

“So there are attacking techniques for the divine sense as well?” Ning instantly felt an itchiness in his heart. His greatest strength was his divine soul, which was already comparable to a Primal Daoist’s. In addition, by relying on the [Nuwa Painting] Visualization technique, his divine soul was continuing to grow stronger by the day. At this point, however, he had only been able to use his divine will to control items to assist himself. He had never heard that there were techniques which could allow one to use one’s divine sense to directly attack someone’s soul!

“A divine sense attack? How would that even work? I’ve never heard of

it...it must be an extremely high-level technique. Since that black-haired man is able to use it, then I imagine the Black-White College must have this divine sense technique amongst this records.” Ning instantly made up his mind that no matter what, he had to acquire and learn this technique.

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The black-haired man and the rest of the six figures flew into the cave. They all appeared different; one looked graceful, another was short and chubby, a third was cold-faced...but they all possessed shockingly powerful auras.

Ning and the rest of the nine called out respectfully, “Respectful greetings, seniors.” The six Primal Daoists swept Ning and the rest of the nine with their gazes. “Mm.” Quite a few gazes paused for a period of time after landing on Ning.

“You.” The black-haired, middle-aged man pointed to a blue-clothed youth who wore a crown and whose gaze was flashing. The blue-clothed youth’s face changed, and he hurriedly said, “Senior, this junior is Eastriver Lush.”

Ning and the others gave him a glance. Eastriver clan? That was one of the eight major powers.

“Eastriver clan?” The black-haired, middle-aged man laughed coldly. “I don’t care where you came from. Everyone, even a member of the Northmont clan of Stillwater or the imperial clan of the Grand Xia Dynasty, must obey the rules of the Black-White College if they wish to join our Black-White College. You used a Dao-seal. You violated the rules. Hurry up and begone.”

The crowned youth gritted his teeth, then immediately transformed into a ray of light as he flew towards the cave entrance.

“He used a Dao-seal?” Ning stared in astonishment at this disciple of the Eastriver clan. When testing new disciples, there had been, at the gate, a list of the various necessary requirements. Dao-seals and other external sources of support were forbidden. One had to rely on one’s own power to pass the trials. All who used external sources of power would be expelled.

“You are Mu Northson?” The black-haired man turned to look towards the white-robed youth, a smile on his face. “Greetings, senior,” Northson said respectfully. The black-haired, middle-aged man nodded. “Fourteen years. Not bad. Let me take a look at your construct.”

“Alright.” Northson knew the rules; there were restrictions on utilizing constructs. If one was an Immortal practitioner who walked on the Dao of Constructs and golems...if they wished to bring a construct into a trial, it was forbidden for the construct to possess sentience! Nor could there be an elemental energy core within the construct. It had to be completely controlled by their own elemental ki.

Actually, during the earlier trial, the six Primal Daoists could already tell the truth of the matter. This ‘examination’ was just for the sake of following the rules to the letter.

The inspection concluded. “Mm.” The black-haired, middle-aged man nodded. “Acceptable.” Northson immediately accepted the Azure Dragon construct back.

“The eight of you.” The black-haired, middle-aged man swept Ning and the other seven with his gaze. “You’ve passed through the first test. Next is the second and final test. As long as you can pass it, you will become a disciple of our Black-White College. If, however, you are unable to pass, I’ll have to ask you to all leave.”

“The second and final test?” Ning was surprised. Even that black-haired youth who had reached the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] had just barely passed the first test. And yet, there was a second, follow-up test?

“Chong, child.” One of the six Primal Daoists, that white-robed woman, spoke out. The black-clothed youth said respectfully, “Aunt.”

“Once you reach the ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram], you will definitely be able to enter our Black-White College. But you are only at the seventh...” The white-robed woman shook her head.

“I can’t wait any longer. I’ll need at least ten to twenty years to reach the ninth stage,” the black-clothed youth replied impatiently. The white-robed

woman shook her head. "You won't be able to pass the final test."

"Aunt. I wish to try." The black-clothed youth gritted his teeth. How could he casually give up at a time like this?

His response caused the white-robed woman to shake her head.

Chapter 19: The Final Guardian

As one of the managers of this recruitment effort, Fairy Hua Yun naturally knew how difficult the final test would be. This junior of her clan, Hua Chong, had no chance of success at all.

“The eight of you, follow me,” the black-haired, middle-aged man said. The six Primal Daoists began to walk in front, while Ji Ning and the rest of the eight followed from behind.

Ning glanced sideways at the nearby black-clothed youth. The youth’s eyes were filled with defiance and madness. His aunt was Fairy Hua Yun... her status in the Hua clan was extremely high, and although the Hua clan had an Immortal guarding it, since Fairy Hua Yun was a Primal Daoist of the Black-White College, her combat prowess was definitely comparable to an Immortal’s.

He had to honor and respect the words of Fairy Hua Yun. But...he also had to enter the Black-White College. He, too, wished to be like his aunt and be a member of the Black-White College! “I have to enter. The Dao of the Heavens ensures that one will always have a chance.” The black-clothed youth gritted his teeth.

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After walking through the dark, gloomy caves for a period of time, they arrived at an exit. Up ahead, there were nine different entrances.

“Halt,” the black-haired man said. Ning and the other seven all came to a halt. “These nine entrances are each guarded by a Zifu Disciple of our Black-White College.” The black-haired, middle-aged man swept Ning and the others with his gaze. “The eight of you shall each choose a passageway.”

The faces of Ning and the rest of the eight all changed. What?! Guarded by full disciples of the Black-White College? These were people who trained in supreme techniques and arts, while the eight of them were all only early Zifu Ki Refiners.

“After you each enter your chosen corridors, you will encounter these guardian disciples. As long as you are able to charge through out of cave while they are guarding it, you will become a disciple of our Black-White College.” A smile was on the face of the man. “Don’t worry. These Zifu Disciples on guard are only permitted to use a single type of technique, while all of you can go all out. In addition, there is no need for you to defeat the guardian disciple; you only need to charge out of the cave. Afterwards, we shall all reunite at the peak of this mountain.”

“Alright.” Ning and the rest of the eight all nodded. “Go, then,” the black-haired, middle-aged man instructed.

They quickly each selected a corridor. Ning pondered slightly, then chose one for himself as well. Only the black-haired youth hesitated for a period of time...and then, gritting his teeth, he entered a corridor as well. All of them entered their corridors.

“Wu Xiu.” The short, pudgy, bald man laughed. “You are in charge of this disciple recruitment, and are managing it from start to finish. Tell me, of the eight, which will be able to become disciples of our Black-White College?”

The black-haired, middle-aged man hesitated. “If I have to choose...of the eight, I’d say Ji Ning will definitely succeed!”

“Right.”

“Yes, he’ll definitely succeed.”

“Everyone knows that Ji Ning will succeed, old Daoist Wu Xiu. What about the other seven?” All of the others were laughing while speaking.

The black-haired, middle-aged man pondered for a bit longer, then said, “Of these eight, only Ji Ning will definitely succeed. It will be hard for all of the other seven. If you insist on me choosing someone...that fourteen year old kid who controls the Azure Dragon construct, Mu Northson. There’s a chance for him as well.”

“Mm.”

“Right. Aside from Ji Ning, the others will all find it quite difficult,

especially that clansman of Fairy Hua Yun. He found it rather difficult to even make it through the lightning construct array; he definitely won't make it past this one."

"Everyone knows how smart you are." The white-robed woman gave the bearded, middle-aged man who just spoke a hard look.

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While the Primal Daoists were chatting amongst themselves, they were also using their divine senses to investigate what was going on within each of the mountain tunnels.

"Oh, it's Bloodrinker Bladask."

"The corridor which Ji Ning chose is guarded by that kid, Bladask? He's quite arrogant. He definitely won't make it easy for Ji Ning to pass through." The Primal Daoists all leisurely watched the events going on through the eight corridors.

Within the corridor Ning had chosen. Roughly a hundred meters past the entrance, there was a white-robed youth. This youth had three bloodstains on the side of his chest. A white vest, with three drops of blood on the chest...only the genius disciples who had acquired the legacy of the Bloodrinker clan were qualified to wear this.

The Bloodrinker clan...was one of the supreme tribes that was located outside of Stillwater Commandery.

"They had me stand guard?" The white-robed youth, Bladask, just stood there, a flying sword hovering around his body. He gently stretched out a finger and tapped it. Rumble...a sword hymn instantly filled the cave. He couldn't help but close his eyes, revealing a look of enjoyment on his face. "No matter how much of a genius you are, you can forget about successfully passing through the tunnel I have chosen."

Bloodrinker Bladask's arrogance made it so that he definitely would not permit any juniors of the early Zifu Disciple stage to successfully pass through his cave.

"A single sword...they only permitted me to use this single sword. Still, it

will be enough.” The white-robed youth tapped the sword again, and the sword hummed out in response, as though it were behaving coquettishly towards him. He couldn’t help but smile.

Since the day he was born, he had held a wooden sword as he slept. His parents had named him ‘Bladask’, and in the past thirty years, he had focused all of his efforts on his blade. He was at the point where he was his blade, and the blade was him. Although he was in possession of the consummate skills of the Bloodrinker clan, the clan had still sent him to the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery. He had lived up to their expectations and had entered the Black-White College.

“He’s coming.” The white-clothed youth sensed the impending ripples. Suddenly, he heard a resigned voice ring out from outside. “Nine corridors, eight contestants. Mine ends up being the only one with no selectee...my fellow disciples, I hope that none of you will let these juniors make it through.”

“Don’t worry, senior apprentice-brother Ox.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Ox, how sad for you.”

“You’ve waited all this time for nothing.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Ox, although I’m only permitted a single magic treasure, these juniors definitely won’t be able to pass through.”

One voice after another rang out in response. Bladask also shouted back, “Junior apprentice-brother Ox, please wait just a moment. After I turn back this kid, we’ll go back together.”

Footsteps rang out. Bladask immediately stared forward carefully. He saw, from afar, a figure emerge from the depths of the tunnel. A youth with delicate, handsome features emerged, holding a sword in each hand, dressed in furs, and a smile on his face.

“Junior.” Bloodrinker Bladask tapped the flying sword in front of him, and the sword hummed in response. Bladask said calmly, “In the future, remember this clearly – the one who prevented you from entering the Black-White College is me, Bloodrinker Bladask.”

“I am...” Ning was about to say something, but Bladask interrupted calmly, “No need to tell me. We won’t meet again. You don’t need to give me your name.”

Ning frowned. How arrogant. Since this was the case...then he might as well just go ahead and win this quickly and cleanly.

“Let the lightning descend!” Bladask called out softly, and as soon as he did, that flying sword in front of him began to emit a thundering sound. One bolt of lightning actually appeared in the surrounding area, all swirling around that flying sword, then flooding towards Ning with shocking power.

The strength of this blow alone was far superior to the power of Adept Xu Li and the Monoceros. The sword seemed to have transformed into countless bolts of lightning, striking at an astonishing speed.

“Let the lotus flower bloom.” Ning had a faint smile on his face. Instantly, Waterflame Loti appeared around him. One layer after another of the flower bloomed; a total of six layers of flowers appeared.

Crackle crackle crackle...

The sword of lightning cut directly through all six layers, but its speed had clearly dropped somewhat. Ning’s Darknorth Swords swept out in a deceptively simple manner, deflecting that powerful, vicious sword blow to one side.

“Such power.” Ning frowned slightly. It had appeared as though he had received that blow with ease, but in reality, his hand had cracked slightly at the point between his thumb and index finger.

“So you do have some ability. It is useless, however!” Bladask suddenly let out a loud roar. “Thundergod’s Hell!”

The flying sword continued to hang there in midair, but around it, one violet bolt of lightning after another appeared. These bolts of serpentine lightning zigzagged into the shape of a prison, and a powerful pressure filled the entire caverns.

“Feel proud that you were defeated by this technique of mine,” Bladask

said coldly. “Go.”

BOOM!

The Thundergod Prison technique flew rapidly towards Ning.

“The Black-White College’s disciples live up to their reputation. With but a single flying sword, he’s still able to unleash such power and activate so much of the energy of the world.” Ning mentally sighed in praise as made one flying sword after another appear in the area around him. In total, 729 flying swords emerged.

“A sword formation!” The distant Bladask’s face changed. Anything that had to do with the word ‘formation’ could not be belittled, and there were many swords in this one. If one could perfectly focus all of the energy into a whole, then the power of that one blow would be explosive! As a disciple of the Black-White College, Bladask naturally also was in possession of sword formation techniques, but for the purposes of this assignment, he was only able to use a single sword.

The 729 flying swords hung there in the air. Amongst them, there were eighty one Mortal-ranked flying swords; they included the Nine Yang Sword Formation swords that Ning had acquired from the underwater estate, and the seventy two flying swords Ning had acquired after killing Adept Xu Li. Although he had some other other Mortal-ranked flying swords as well, there weren’t enough of them, and they were all varied and different in nature. Thus, Ning didn’t use them.

The nine flying swords of the Nine Yang Swords served as the core formation base, while the other seventy two Mortal-ranked flying swords, all of which came from the same origin, swirled around them, forming a grand formation of eighty one flying swords. They, in turn, guided the six hundred-plus unranked flying swords.

“Rumble...” Ning’s elemental ki filled those flying swords and was transformed by them. His divine soul, which was at the divine sense level, was completely capable of controlling all of these swords, and soon, in front of his chest, a shocking, awe-inspiringly powerful sword light appeared.

The power of this technique was now truly astonishing. The reason why it was so strong was primarily because of those nine incredibly rare flying swords he had acquired from the underwater estate. Every single one of them was comparable to an Earth-ranked magic treasure, and they all came from the same source, which was even rarer.

“Kill!” Ning willed the attack. Swish! The sword light, now completely in the shape of a real flying sword, shot out through the air, forcibly slashing open the impending prison of lightning.

BOOM! Moments later, the lightning prison detonated in awe-inspiring fashion.

“Go, go, go.” Ning hurriedly executed three more attacks of sword light, striking out in succession.

“Not good.” Bladask’s face changed dramatically. He was a peak Zifu Disciple, after all, while Ning, by controlling and transforming his ki through the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] and forming it into his sword light, had a purity of ki that was comparable to a Wanxiang Adept’s. In terms of sword techniques...Bladask was of the Bloodrinker clan and was an elite member of the Black-White College; naturally, he was formidable. But in terms of true insight and comprehension, Ning was on an even higher level. Thus, when Ning activated his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], Bladask actually was at a disadvantage.

“Polaris.” Bladask had no other choice. In an instant, seven flying swords appeared, flashing with lightning. The seven flying swords swirled around him, forming into the pattern of an enormous constellation; it was the Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper.

“Down!” Bladask growled. Bang! Bang! Bang! Ning’s three flashes of sword light were all shattered by the slowly revolving Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper.

“Hmph.” Bladask turned his head, collected his flying swords, then transformed into a ray of light and departed. Per the rules, he was only permitted to use a single flying sword...since he had been forced to bring out his other magic treasures, he had naturally lost.

“How formidable.” Ning watched as that disciple of Black-White College, ‘Bloodrinker Bladask’, departed. He couldn’t help but sigh in amazement. “The school should have limited him to using just a single flying sword. As soon as he showed his real power...he instantly suppressed my [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. He’s a peak Zifu Disciple, after all, while I am an early stage Zifu Disciple. The difference in elemental ki strength...when I encounter another unparalleled genius, the difference is clear.”

What Ning didn’t realize...was that actually, all he had to do was fly out of the cave. And yet, he had insisted on forcing the guardian to show his real power instead.

“The Black-White College.” Ning slowly strolled forward, walking out of the cave. He stepped onto a flying boat, then stared at the boundless, beautiful mountain scenery around him. From this day forward, he would truly be a member of the Black-White College.

Chapter 20: Ji Ning, Disciple of the Black-White College

The six Primal Daoists at the entrance to the caves were roaring with laughter. “Hahahaha...this Ji Ning really is formidable. He lives up to his reputation as someone who has gained insight into a Dao Domain. That sword formation technique...although I’ve never heard of it, it clearly is an extremely complicated and powerful sword formation. For it to control more than seven hundred swords...the demands it must place on his soul and on his level of comprehension are definitely extremely, extremely high.”

The short, chubby old man shook his head. “He, an early stage Zifu Disciple Ki Refiner, was able to force the peak Zifu-level Bloodrinker Bladask to release his own sword formation to block it. Bladask didn’t have any face to remain after that, and so he immediately left.”

“Right. Formidable.”

“He clearly could’ve just charged out of the cave, but he insisted on fighting one-on-one, fighting to the point where he forced the guardian disciple to voluntarily retreat.”

These Primal Daoists all sighed with praise. Naturally, all of them took a liking to such a formidable disciple. This meant that their Black-White College would rise in power yet again. Centuries later, perhaps the Black-White College would produce yet another formidable Immortal.

“We must provide him with good guidance and tutelage. This Ji Ning has the potential to become an Immortal,” the black-haired, middle-aged man said. The white-robed woman nodded. “Indeed, he must be properly guided. He can’t be pampered; if we end up ruining this piece of unpolished jade, that would be a huge waste.”

Tutelage was an art all its own. Geniuses were naturally endowed with arrogance and pride, and the path of Immortals was that of the three calamities and nine tribulations. One would grow up in the midst of battle,

and there was no way one could avoid establishing grudges with anyone. All these things could possibly result in a genius perishing!

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Ning rode atop his boat, moving straight to the very peak of the mountain. "A total of eight people went for the trial. I wonder how many passed." Ning continued to wait there. "I wonder if that Mu Northson was able to pass or not." Of the others, the only one who Ning had spoken with was Northson, and he had quite a good impression of him.

Swoosh!

From afar, a ray of light flew towards Ning, followed by yet another ray of light.

"Hey, someone passed? Which cave was it? Which of our fellow disciples was guarding that cave?"

Ning stared into the distance. He could just barely make out the appearance of a disciple of the Black-White College. That disciple gave Ning a few curious glances, then departed.

Moments later. Whoooosh. That distant ray of light shot over; it was an Azure Dragon construct. "Mu Northson." Ning was surprised, then immediately clasped his hands. "Congratulations, felicitations."

"Same to you, same to you." The white-robed youth, Northson, landed and stored away his construct, his face filled with joy. "Brother Ji Ning, you truly are formidable. I was nearly defeated, but in the end, I finally managed to charge out of the caves. But you were even more formidable; you made it out so quickly."

Ning could sense the joy radiating out from Northson as he spoke. His eyes were filled with excitement as well. "Success. I've finally become a disciple of the Black-White College. If Mother finds out, she will definitely be very happy."

"Right." Ning nodded, his gaze growing distant. If his own mother knew that he had become a disciple of the Black-White College, she would definitely be proud as well.

“Father...mother...just wait and see. I, Ji Ning, will definitely have my name be spread throughout these vast lands. I will become one of the supreme existences of this world. Definitely! Those disciples of Snowdragon Mountain who caused your deaths...I will definitely execute them all!”

“Hahaha.” Six figures flew out in an arcing pattern, laughing as they did so. They instantly arrived at the top of the mountain. It was the six Primal Daoists.

The short, pudgy, bald one laughed, “This year, our Black-White College has taken in quite a few disciples; two at once!” The black-haired, middle-aged man said, “Today’s only the first day. We still have two more days.”

“Hmph. Everyone capable of joining our Black-White College is a true, unparalleled genius. Geniuses like that are all supremely confident; if they were to join, they would make us their very first choice. Thus, they would come on the first day.” The short, pudgy, bald man shook his head. “It’s been so many years; how many people ended up joining our Black-White College on the second or third days? If they did, it was only because they were delayed slightly and unable to make it.”

The black-haired, middle-aged man looked towards Ning and Northson. “Ji Ning. Mu Northson. The two of you, starting today, are now the disciples of our Black-White College.” Ning and Northson both felt surges of joy in their hearts.

“The grand ceremony of formal apprenticeship will occur after the next two days of recruitment are finished.” The black-haired man waved his hand, and two insignias appeared. One side of each insignia was white, while the other side was black. “This is the insignia of our Black-White College’s disciples. You can bind it now, and in the future, you will be able to freely enter many of the locations of the Black-White College without being attacked by the various restrictive formations within.”

“Alright.” Ning and Northson each accepted an insignia. They naturally were able to easily bond it, and upon doing so, Ning could immediately sense that there was a grand formation throughout the entire Black-White

College. He could sense...that this was a terrifying formation indeed. It encompassed the entire college...and he could sense that it acknowledged him. Ning felt as though this insignia was quite similar to the control talisman for the underwater estate.

“A disciple of the Black-White College.” Ning looked at the insignia. How many people desired this insignia? That Hua Chong, the black-clothed youth who had also trained to the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram]...he had failed, in the end. There were also several other geniuses who were even more talented than Hua Chong, but they had been eliminated as well. Only Ning and Northson had been accepted as disciples of the Black-White College.

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“Wu Xiu, we’ll let you make the arrangements for their residences. We’re going back now,” the bearded, middle-aged man grinned. “Yes, we’re leaving.” The other Primal Daoists immediately flew into the air, quickly departing.

The black-haired, middle-aged man waved his hand. A mist instantly arose, lifting up the three of them. “Let’s go.” The black-haired Wu Xiu immediately guided Ning and Northson to fly forward.

“The entire Black-White College is divided into multiple areas, and it has many rules.” Wu Xiu waved his hand, then took out two books which he tossed to them. “This book has the rules of our Black-White College, as well as some other things which you must know. You must memorize everything within it.”

Ning and Northson accepted the book. Lowering their heads, they saw just two words on the book; ‘Black’ and ‘White’.

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Atop the peak of a small mountain, there was a graceful little villa. There were multiple buildings surrounding it, but at the peak of this little mountain, Ning was the only person present.

“From today onwards, I am the master of this peak.” Ning stood in

midair, staring down at his mountain peak. Because the Black-White College had so few formal disciple, one could choose any mountain one wanted to become one's estate. Ning thus selected this one, giving it the name 'Darknorth Peak'.

Darknorth...this was also the name of the swords he wielded. They symbolized that he would embark on a path of his own.

Darknorth. This also was the place where his parents had met and fallen in love. This was a way of memorializing his parents.

"Father. Mother..." Ning was silent for quite some time as he reminisced. And then, he turned his head and immediately flew towards the skies atop his flying boat.

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Soon, he arrived at the formal gates to the Black-White College. His Uncle White had been waiting here the entire time. Ning immediately saw that large, snowy white dog who was quietly waiting by the side of the lake. The Whitewater Hound was simply standing there, waiting.

"Uncle White." Ning immediately charged down. The Whitewater Hound lifted his head, a questioning look in his eyes. "It's done." Ning landed, then nodded. "I'm already a disciple of the Black-White College."

"If Big Brother Yichuan knew this, he would definitely be ecstatic." The Whitewater Hound's eyes became filled with delight and excitement as well. The Black-White College! What sort of a school was this? The status of a formal disciple of Black-White College was far higher than that of a Wanxiang Adept of an ordinary school.

Right at this moment...

"Hahaha, Brother Ji Ning, you only have eyes for this spirit-beast of yours. You didn't even notice me." A voice rang out, and Ning immediately turned to look. There was a carriage parked before the gates, and Northmont Baiwei was descending from that carriage.

"Brother Baiwei." Ning immediately went to greet him. Baiwei said, "I expected that you would definitely become a disciple of the Black-White

College, so I predicted that you would return at around nightfall.”

“Sorry for making you wait so long, Brother Baiwei,” Ning said. Baiwei’s eyes radiated excitement as he spoke. “Not long at all. You have no idea how happy I was as I waited. Especially towards the end, when those other geniuses emerged, like Hua Chong, Liu Shuilian...they have been famous for quite some time now, but in the end, all of them had been eliminated.”

Ning nodded gently. “Hua Chong and the others you mentioned; they should have been eliminated after the final trial.” Ning had a fairly deep impression regarding Hua Chong, who also had reached the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] and whose aunt was a Primal Daoist of the school.

“No matter what, they all slunk away in defeat,” Baiwei said. “In the end...the Skysplitter Sword Sect, the Hundred Flowers Fairyland, and the other schools will still accept many disciples. Given their talent, they can easily enter. Only the Black-White College...unless one is truly a supreme, unparalleled genius, they won’t accept them. Even the most talented of geniuses must undergo a thorough examination. Given their pride, of course they came. What a pity, what a pity.”

There was no hint of pity on the face of Baiwei at all; all he had on his face was a look of schadenfreude.

“Right. How many disciples did the Black-White College accept this time?” Baiwei hurriedly asked. “Today was the first day. They took in two disciples,” Ning replied. “I was one. Another is named Mu Northson.”

Baiwei nodded lightly. “Mu Northson? This is a name I’ve never heard of before. It seems as though some of the backwater, out-of-the-way areas will occasionally produce a supreme genius from time to time. When you are free, why don’t you bring this Mu Northson over? We’ll meet and make friends with each other.”

“Easily done,” Ning nodded. Baiwei said, “I came for two reasons. First, to congratulate you on becoming a disciple of the Black-White College. Secondly, to ask you for some help.”

Ning laughed. “As long as I can help, I will.” Baiwei looked at Ning.

“Here’s the situation. You should know that formal disciples of the Black-White College are permitted to bring in ten retainers with them, right?”

Ning nodded. Ten retainers...to be a retainer of a disciple of the Black-White College was far more alluring a position than being a disciple of an ordinary school. This was because the retainer would live within the Black-White College! Even though it would be very, very hard for them to acquire any techniques, anything they did acquire would be supreme, top-tier techniques.”

“Loan me three of those positions,” Baiwei said. “You should know that I have many family and friends. There are many that I will find hard to reject, once they ask me to help.”

Ning laughed. “Why the courtesy? Of the ten positions, you can take nine of them. Just leave one for me!”

That one...

Ning thought back to Meng Roch, who he had encountered on the road to Stillwater City. He knew that after Roch had used a forbidden technique, he had definitely harmed his own foundation. He would most likely find it hard to join any school.

Chapter 21: Viewing the Sculpture at Night

“Leave you with just one?” Baiwei hurriedly shook his head. “How can I do that? Although your Ji clan isn’t too large, you still have people who broke through to the Zifu Disciple level. I imagine some of them would wish to become a retainer for a full disciple of the Black-White College. In addition, in the future, you might encounter a powerful figure who would ask you for a slot. How about this; I’ll shamelessly take five of your retainer positions, while you hold on to the remaining five. If, in the future, the five you have is insufficient, come talk to me...I’ll come up with some methods for having those Zifu Disciples enter a good school. But of course, they must be of the early Zifu stage.”

Ning laughed, then nodded. “That’s fine as well.” But in truth, he really did only need a single slot. Retainers entered the Black-White College for the sake of gaining top-tier Ki Refining techniques, but they ideally needed to be early stage Zifu Disciples as well.

If one entered as a middle stage or late stage Zifu Disciple, one’s path would have become set; there was no way to go back! The Ji clan’s Zifu Disciples consisted of Patriarch Ji Ninefire, Granny Shadow, Ah Xing, and Ji Truekeep.

The Patriarch and the others were all peak Zifu Disciples, while Truekeep was a middle stage Zifu Disciple; their paths were already set. As for the younger members of the Ji clan? For one of them to reach the Zifu Disciple would probably need some time.

“Even if our Ji clan is capable of producing a new Zifu Disciple, they can still rely on their own power to join another sect,” Ning mused to himself. “If my help is truly needed, in a few years, my power and status will most likely be higher as well.” In his heart, though, Ning wanted to let those future descendants of the Ji clan fight for their paths.

At most, he would occasionally give them some opportunities! Only when one adventured through the world by one’s self would one not fear the wind and the waves of life.

“Alright.” Baiwei nodded. “In two days, after the Black-White College has concluded its recruitment cycle, I will send five Zifu Disciples to you, as well as some ordinary commoners.”

“Ordinary commoners?” Ning was startled. Baiwei smiled. “Given how few in number the formal disciples of the Black-White College are, each of them take up an entire mountain for themselves...although the Zifu Disciple are servants and retainers, they still have to train as well. You can’t make them spend all their time boiling water, watering the plants, or doing cleaning, right? You can give them some important tasks, but for the normal tasks, you can have the commoners carry it out.” Ning now understood.

“I won’t tarry any longer. Take a good stroll around the Black-White College.” Baiwei laughed. “The Black-White Diagram of the Black-White College has attracted jealousy from countless powers for many years now. Even the Grand Xia Dynasty will occasionally send people over here, begging for a chance to see the Black-White Diagram. Only formal disciples like you, however, can view it whenever you want.”

After speaking, Baiwei laughed then entered his carriage, departing. Ning turned to look at the Whitewater Hound by his side. “Uncle White, let’s go.” The Whitewater Hound nodded, following him. “Right.”

Swoosh! The man and the snowy white hound both boarded a flying boat, then sped into the air at high speed. It was already dark. The Black-White College, shrouded by the night sky, appeared incomparably tranquil.

“Uncle White,” Ning laughed, “You are at the early Zifu stage. Don’t be in a hurry to train. Soon, I will ask the school for a top-tier Ki Refining technique for you.”

“Thanks for taking the trouble, Ning, son.” The Whitewater Hound looked at Ning. That child who had ridden atop his back while training in archery in the mountains had already grown up. Had become even more powerful than the hound’s elder brother, Ji Yichuan. “Yichuan...I will watch as Ning becomes a truly majestic, heroic figure within these lands.”

Ning didn't know what his Uncle White was thinking. He instructed, "Uncle White, your status within the College will be that of my spirit-beast, and so you'll be able to follow me around and listen to some Primal Daoists and even Immortals expound on the Dao. When following me, you'll also be able to enter the various parts of the Black-White College. If you are moving about by yourself, however, you'll only be able to enter these places."

Ning waved his hand and retrieved that black-and-white book, flipping to one of the pages within it. "This is the map of the Black-White College; there are red lines marking the places where you, Uncle White, can go freely," Ning said.

The Whitewater Hound gave it a quick look, memorizing everything. "Thanks for taking the trouble, Ning." Ning laughed. "No trouble at all." When he looked at Uncle White, he felt as though he had returned to those days when he had lived together with Uncle White, Father, and Mother. His parents were now gone...and Uncle White was his closest family now.

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Spirit-beasts and retainers were different. Retainers who wanted to train in top-tier techniques had to work hard for themselves and be acknowledged by the Black-White College; only then might they have the rare chance to acquire a top-tier Ki Refining technique. In addition, they would only have access to a small number of top-tier Ki Refining techniques. The retainers had to do everything for themselves. For the formal disciples to allow them to enter the Black-White College alongside them was kindness enough.

If Uncle White had entered the Black-White College as a retainer, he too could've relied on his own power, but things would have been very difficult.

As for spirit-beasts, spirit-beasts themselves absolutely could not acquire top-tier Ki Refining techniques. But Ning, by paying a certain price, could ask for a Ki Refining technique for him. It was incomparably easier for a

formal disciple to acquire a top-tier Ki Refining technique, compared to a retainer.

However, given how exacting the requirements the Black-White College placed upon its formal disciples, they couldn't hurry fast enough to learn techniques and arts; how many of them would be willing to sacrifice their own advancement chances for the sake of their spirit-beasts?

"Whoosh." The boat flew to the top of Darknorth Peak. "This is Darknorth Peak." Ning pointed down towards the mountain peak below. "From today onwards, this peak shall belong to me, Ji Ning."

"Uncle White, the only people living at Darknorth Peak for now are you and me. Go and get some rest. I'm going to the restricted area of the Black-White Diagram to take a look," Ning said. "The Black-White Diagram is located in the innermost reaches of the entire Black-White College. Only formal disciples may go view it. Retainers and spirit-beasts are not permitted to do so."

"Go." The Whitewater Hound laughed, then leapt downwards from the boat, transforming into a streak of light that landed atop Darknorth Peak.

Ning nodded. Whoooosh. His ship immediately turned and flew towards another direction.

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Ning descended from the skies. This was a very wide square, and the innermost heart of the entire Black-White College, a restricted area amongst restricted areas. Even the Grand Xia Dynasty or the various supreme powers would have to strive mightily and use all their connections they had in order to come view this Black-White Diagram. Retainers and spirit-beasts were naturally forbidden to come.

"The Black-White Diagram?" Ning stared at the giant stone wall that was erected within the center of the square. The stone was of an unknown type; it radiated an inky black aura, and was covered with dense, crisscrossing black and white lines that formed countless structures. These two different colored lines intersected in innumerable ways, but in doing so formed the image of an enormous, circular bedstone.

Black. White. It was like the night and the day. Like yin and yang. Like water and fire. Like darkness and light...

With Pangu's creation of the universe, everything in the universe had a 'dark' side and a 'light' side; upon seeing those crisscrossing lines, Ning felt as though a powerful aura was surging towards him, and he immediately even felt his soul begin to ache in pain.

"That's not right." Ning hurriedly turned around. "The Black-White Diagram actually has so many different lines all tangled together." Ning was secretly amazed. The Stellar Hall of his underwater estate allowed the various Dao Paths to be completely condensed into separate lines, so that those within could separately focus on comprehending these various Daos. But as for this Black-White College...it mixed in countless Daos, and some were only fragmentary.

But those various fragmentary Daos, when mixed with the other Daos... actually formed this complete Black-White Bedstone Diagram!

"Although in terms of comprehending the Dao, this Black-White Diagram is inferior to the Stellar Hall of the underwater estate...in terms of how the various Daos complement and connect with each other, this Black-White Diagram is actually on a higher level." Ning understood, however, that the Stellar Hall was comparatively far more valuable.

The Dao was one's foundation; swordplay and techniques were all extraneous. When Ning had risen in comprehension and gained the Dao Domain, he had done so because he had risen in his understanding of his Dao!

As for the likes of the Waterflame Lotus, it was a technique that was fused from aspects of various different True Meanings of the Dao; it was a matter of applying the Dao.

The Dao was the foundation. Techniques were an application. The Stellar Hall...it separated the various different Daos, allowing others to clearly comprehend them. Its value was priceless, and it was the reason why Immortal Juhua, a Loose Immortal, was able to live for millions of years, so that even the princes of the Grand Xia Dynasty sought to become

his disciple to no avail.

The Black-White Diagram was most likely formed by nature itself, and thus contained many different things within it. It allowed others to easily gain insights into some of those things and develop certain techniques, such as the Waterflame Lotus.

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“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” An Azure Dragon construct, a figure on its back, descended from the skies. It was Mu Northson. “I didn’t expect you’d arrive even earlier than me, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Northson.” Ning laughed, then instructed, “No matter what, don’t stare directly at that Black-White Diagram. The Daos contained by the Black-White Diagram are simply too vast and unfathomable; we aren’t capable of withstanding them. Just look at a small part of it at a time.”

Unfortunately, his words were slightly too late.

As soon as he had landed, Northson had unconsciously glanced at the Black-White Diagram; naturally, in doing so, he had stared at the entire thing. Instantly, he felt the world start to spin, and his body began to slump and fall from the Azure Dragon construct. Clearly, in terms of the strength of his soul, he was far inferior to Ning, and so his ability to withstand the Black-White Diagram was weaker as well.

Hearing Ning’s words, Northson hurriedly nodded. “Right. We can’t stare directly at the entire Black-White Diagram.”

“Come. Let’s view it slowly.” Ning immediately walked past the stone wall. He stood next to the Black-White Diagram and began to inspect it closely. Actually, next to it, there were two other walls to the left and to the right of it, made from similarly unusual materials which radiated white light. Ning could sense that these three stone walls all had incredibly powerful formations overlaid atop them; most likely, the Immortals of the entire Black-White College paid extremely close attention to this place.

After all, the Black-White College had only risen to power after acquiring the Black-White Diagram. This was their life, their heart.

Each new Immortal of the Black-White College had frenetically added their own powerful formations to seal the diagram, causing it to become terrifyingly powerful by now. Upon being activated, the formations of countless elders of the Black-White College would simultaneously explode. Most likely, even Celestial Immortals would find it hard to survive.

“A three-sided wall. One is the Black-White Diagram, while the other two must have been left behind by the previous Immortals.” Ning glanced at it all. The three-sided stone walls were all more than three hundred meters wide, and they were covered with dense, clustered words, most likely more than ten thousand utterances. From this, one could estimate how many Immortals had been born from the Black-White College.

Ning’s gaze quickly halted at one of the corners of the Black-White Diagram. He began staring at a small part of it, focusing on that part.

The white lines and black lines intersected...they were opposite, and yet alike. A sensation of the marvels of nature completely engulfed Ning. Northson, by his side, was absorbed by the Black-White Diagram as well.

Chapter 22: The Words Left By An Immortal

Throughout the history of the Black-White College, whenever a disciple came to view the Black-White Diagram for the first time, they would gain from it. The experience they had accumulated normally, the insights they had gained normally...upon viewing the Black-White Diagram, they would gain corresponding enlightenment.

Rustle, rustle, rustle...

Ning sat there in the lotus position, meditating as Waterflame Loti began to form around him. One petal after another blossomed, slowly swiveling about him.

A total of six layers of petals had formed...but suddenly, all six layers vanished, reforming into four layers which appeared even more real and solid than the six.

Time flowed on. In the blink of an eye, an hour passed.

Whooosh. The four quite solid-seeming layers of petals vanished as well, reforming into a total of two layers of petals. One of two layers of lotus petals was formed from red petals, while the other was formed from green petals. The two looked identical to the lotus petals of a real lotus flower.

Rustle...

The lotus flower slowly swiveled, and the grinding, killing power of the two layers of lotus petals grew increasingly powerful. The lotus petals became increasingly clear and lifelike, especially the green lotus petals; slowly, it continued to grow so lifelike that one could see the plant veins as well. Even at close range, most would probably take it to be a naturally grown lotus petal.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly woke up, then nodded gently. “I gained from my previously accumulated experiences. It seems as though my understanding of the Dao has reached a bottleneck in terms of being able to combine water, fire, and wind.”

He looked towards the nearby Mu Northson. Northson was still absorbed in his trance, appearing either drunk or mesmerized. “I have the Stellar Hall in my underwater estate. Although the Black-White Diagram is of use to me, it isn’t as useful as it was to Northson.” Ning turned to walk to the stone wall on the other side. This wall was covered with words left behind by countless generations of Immortals.

One row after another of words.

“The path of Immortal cultivation is the Dao of the grand struggle. These are the words of Five Disgraces!” The powerful intent that surged forth from these characters made Ning feel as though he could see an Immortal cultivator who was constantly advancing, struggling against the heavens, against the earth, against other men, against monsters...

“Consider all things carefully, but act with bravery and resoluteness.” An invisible, grim callousness radiated from these words.

“Where my heart leads me is where I shall go.” A confident, prideful aura radiated from these words, as though no one could block him from moving forward on the path which his Dao-heart had decided upon. Any who tried would be slaughtered.

“All mortal and worldly things shall decay; I ask for just two words; Immortal Life.”

Domineering.

Arrogant.

Fierce.

Leisurely.

Calm.

Simple.

The words left behind by the Immortals of the Black-White Diagram caused Ning’s Dao-heart to be baptized time and time again. He felt as though he could look past time itself to ages past; as though he could watch as these Immortal cultivators held firm to their own Dao-hearts and

embarked on their own paths.

“Such powerful, resolved, and untainted Dao-hearts,” Ning murmured to himself. Power. Resolve. Purity. These were the things Ning sensed from the words left behind by these Immortals. Anyone capable of becoming an Immortal had understood his or her own heart long ago, and knew what their heart’s desire was! In addition, their Dao-hearts would be incomparably pure and resolved; they wouldn’t succumb to temptations or let themselves be led astray. The passage of countless years had caused their Dao-hearts to grow incomparably strong.

But if the Dao-hearts of these Immortals somehow grew bewildered, then their faith in themselves would collapse, and they might lose everything they had built up over a thousand years! In fact, in the worst case scenarios, they might not even be able to control the incomparably powerful elemental ki in their bodies, resulting in death.

From this, one could see that the path of Immortal cultivation was an extremely difficult path; it was the path of challenging destiny.

“The only desire in my heart is to be carefree, to be able to do as I please. I only ask that my destiny be in my own hands.” As Ning continued to read, his own Dao-heart grew increasingly pure as well.

The pain and agony he had suffered in his previous life made it so that he was not willing to submit to fate. Not willing to allow his destiny to be controlled by others. In this life, his parents had both died; this caused Ning to feel an even greater desire for the ability to not be controlled by destiny.

However, if one wished to surpass the bonds of fate, then one would have to gain tremendous power! Only by being powerful would one truly be carefree and be able to act as one pleased!

.....

Ning read the words of one Immortal after another. Although Immortal cultivators read very quickly, by the time he finished reading that section of the wall, it was already very late at night.

“Eh?” Ning turned to look at Northson. Northson continued to sit there in the lotus position, staring at the Black-White Diagram. Around him were various parts and pieces that were formed from natural, elemental energy. The countless parts and pieces sometimes joined together and sometimes split apart, forming dragons, tigers, serpents, turtles...all sorts of monstrous beasts and strange creatures appeared, constantly forming and reforming.

“He’s making a breakthrough. Junior apprentice-brother Northson’s insights have reached a tipping point.” Ning felt secret admiration; he had spent less than two hours in meditation, but his junior apprentice-brother Northson had spent far more time than he had in comprehending the Black-White Diagram.

“The other stone wall.” Ning turned to look at the final, third stone wall. The words left behind by the various Immortals were actually meant to help refine the Dao-hearts of their successors. For juniors whose Dao-hearts were not sufficiently stable, it could have the effect of helping them to constantly train and test their hearts. Thus, although the Black-White Diagram served as the foundation of the Black-White College, the words left behind by these Immortals to train the Dao-hearts of their successors could also be considered one of the important things which this supreme, top-tier school relied upon as it passed down its traditions over the course of countless years.

This, too, was their foundation!

.....

The night sky.

A short old man, dressed in ragged beggar’s clothes, stood atop the clouds, holding a calabash of wine and appearing quite at ease.

He seemed to be the very center of the world around him, as though everything would obey his commands. This natural feeling of dominance, of power...it gave the short old man an aura that was definitely not inferior to Northmont Blacktiger’s, and perhaps even more astonishing and terrifying. However, as long as one was not too close to him, one couldn’t

sense his majestic presence at all.

“I’ve overcome the ninth-century tribulation... what a wonderful, wonderful feeling.” The short old man shook his head, seeming completely delighted with himself. “I’ll have nine hundred more years of good living.” Raising his head, he gargled in a large mouthful of Immortal wine.

“Uh?” The short old man suddenly halted, staring down at the Black-White Diagram below him. “Two youngsters?” The short old man nodded slightly. “Come to think of it, today is the day in which our Black-White College is accepting new recruits. It seems these two are new disciples. This old Daoist wants to take a good look at them.”

“That white-robed kid...he walks the Dao of Constructs? And he seems quite impressive; quite talented, in fact. It seems as though although I have been in seclusion for many years, the quality of the disciples of our Black-White College hasn’t dropped in the slightest.” The old man nodded in satisfaction, then turned his gaze towards Ji Ning, who was staring at the the stone wall with writing atop it. “That kid dressed in furs; he’s actually reading those words that were left behind? Can it be that he has finished viewing the Black-White Diagram? I wonder how long that kid viewed the Black-White Diagram for, and how his potential is.”

The longer one was able to view the Black-White Diagram, the more one would gain from it.

.....

Ning continued to read the words left behind by the Immortals on the wall. Every single character was a representation of the path an Immortal had followed. Amongst these Immortals, there was only a single Celestial Immortal; the rest were all Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals. From this, one could tell how difficult it was for someone to truly escape the confines of the Three Realms and no longer be bound by the Five Elements.

“Eh?”

Ning looked towards a new line of words, but as soon as his gaze fell upon it, he suddenly felt as though a sword was being pointed at his eyes.

“My three-foot sword in hand, I shall exterminate all injustices! These are the words of Northwalker!”

A very simple line of words. Ning stared at this line of words, left behind by Immortal Northwalker, and could vaguely sense the powerful energy emanating from these words. As Ning carefully sensed and probed it with his own soul, instantly, a powerful aura instantly sprang out from these words, completely filling his consciousness.

A silver-haired old man stood in the void, a sword in his hand. Hua! His entire body became filled with a heaven-towering sword ki, as though he himself had transformed into an enormous sword.

“What a sharp sword.” When Ning saw the silver-haired elder, he had the feeling as though the elder himself was a sword as well, and the most indestructible, the toughest, the most overbearing sword in existence at that. In fact, Ning even felt as though nothing could possibly withstand this silver-haired elder.

Ning trained in the sword ever since he was young. The sword was the weapon of his choice, and his father had personally taught him. By now, Ning had the heart of a true swordsman. When he saw this figure, who appeared to be the utmost embodiment of that which swordsmen aspired to become...the desire Ning felt in his heart and the sincerity he felt towards the sword slowly began to transform, causing that aura that had filled him to begin to resonate with him..

.....

“Eh? That fur-clad little...” The short old man in the clouds above stared down in shock. “Is this...?”

Ning, in the plaza below, was standing next to one of the giant stone wall, and on that stone wall, a certain line of characters was slowly beginning to glow and radiate light. The characters were, ‘My three-foot sword in hand, I shall exterminate all injustices! These are the words of Northwalker!’. Every single character was lighting up, and a powerful sword-intent completely filled each and every one of them.

Ning just stood there, his entire body faintly radiating a sword intent as

well. The two had actually begun to resonate with each other. The sword-intent radiating from Ning was far from being able to compare to the heaven-shaking profoundness of the line of characters, but without question, the sword-intent radiating from him was resonating with that of the wall.

“He actually...he actually managed to activate the sword-intent ripples left behind by senior Northwalker?” The short elder stared downwards in astonishment. Although Immortal Northwalker was a Loose Immortal, it could be said that within the Black-White College, his status was comparable to that Celestial Immortal’s, and in fact, his influence was even a bit greater. He had lived for over a million years before finally perishing under the weight of the increasingly powerful heavensent Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations.

A Loose Immortal who had survived for a million years? This was something out of the legends. Loose Immortals capable of surviving for a hundred thousand years were already incredibly powerful figures; afterwards, surviving for another hundred thousand would be very difficult. Loose Immortals that had survived for two hundred thousand years and three hundred thousand years...they were all completely different, but the longer they lived, the more terrifying their power was.

Loose Immortals who crossed the threshold of one million years were absolutely comparable to Celestial Immortals. However, in terms of the foundation of their elemental ki, they were clearly weaker than Celestial Immortals; the reason they were said to be comparable was because in terms of their comprehension of the Dao, their degree of enlightenment, and their techniques, they were superior to Celestial Immortals! This was why, despite being mere Loose Immortals, they were comparable to Celestial Immortals!

“Sword-intent? The sword-intent ripples are this strong?” The short old man stared, wide-eyed, at the scene below.

.....

Within Ning’s consciousness. The sword-intents of himself and the

words had reached an astonishing level of resonance. The figure of that silver-haired elder in his mind...suddenly began to move and display sword techniques. At the same time, he began to chant out the words to a song.

“What is the purpose of a life lived?”

“All I ask for is to be joyful.”

“Kill, kill, kill.”

“Exterminate all injustices!”

“Exterminate all those who deserve killing!”

“Only then will I be exultant.”

“As Loose Immortals, there is no path to immortality.”

“Thus...”

“Better to live passionately for a day, than to live a century while stifled.”

“My sword is the joyous sword, the sword of passion, the sword which exterminates all injustices. The name of this sword technique is the [Three-Foot Sword].”

The voice of the old man echoed within the vast, empty void of Ning’s consciousness.

Chapter 23: Immortal Diancai

The short elder clutched that gourd of wine in his hands, but completely forgot to drink from it. He stared downwards towards the fur-clad youth. The sword-intent radiating from the youth was incomparably firm and resolved, and it continuously resonated with the glowing words on the stone wall.

“Epochal Transmission!”

“Senior Northwalker is transmitting his sword intent to him. And, from the looks of it, this fur-clad youth seems to be receiving it with ease; clearly, he too has the heart of a true Sword Immortal.” The short elder took a deep breath, tamping down his excitement, then turned and sent mentally with a howl, “Junior apprentice-brother Diancai, hurry the hell out!”

“Hurry the hell out!”

“Hurry the hell out!”

His voice transmitted through the air, past countless layers of restrictive spells, and entered the ears of a black-robed, black-haired man who was currently seated in the lotus position atop a jade bed.

“Eh?” The black-haired man revealed a hint of puzzlement in his eyes as he opened them. But then, a look of understanding appeared. “It seems as though senior apprentice-brother Fivecraze has successfully endured the great tribulation which occurs every nine centuries. And he seems to be in quite a good mood!”

The black-robed, black-haired man took a single step forward, then disappeared from his room.

The night sky. The black-robed, black-haired man strode through the skies, moving a hundred kilometers with each step. If one didn’t stare at him carefully, it would seem as though he wasn’t even present.

“Senior apprentice-brother Fivecraze,” the black-haired, black-clothed man said. The short old man gave him a glance, blinked, then mumbled to

himself, “You freak. You are growing more and more powerful. It’s been less than a century since we last met, but you’ve reached such a level of power. After I entered the Black-White College, you are the only one I have met who I believe has a great chance of becoming a Celestial Immortal.”

“The path to becoming a Celestial Immortal is incomparably difficult. All I can do is strive as much as I can and to use all my power to attain that goal.” The black-haired, black-clothed man laughed. “Your junior apprentice-brother has to congratulate you, senior apprentice-brother Fivecraze. You once again overcame the nine-century tribulation.”

“I didn’t call you over to chat about becoming a Celestial Immortal.” The short elder pointed downwards. “Quick, look.” Immortal Diancai stared downwards. There were two people in the plaza; one was currently meditating in front of the Black-White Diagram, clearly reaping great rewards from it, while the other was in front of one of the stone walls with words left behind by the Immortals. A line of characters atop that stone wall was currently glowing with light, and the light from each character was incomparably blinding. At the same time, surges of deep, powerful sword-intent radiated from the characters.

The line of words was: ‘My three-foot sword in hand, I shall exterminate all injustices! These are the words of Northwalker!’

“Senior Northwalker’s Epochal Transmission?” Immortal Diancai was stunned. He was an absolute genius which even the Black-White College saw only once in a million years, and the member of the Black-White College with the greatest chance of becoming a Celestial Immortal. When Immortal Diancai had originally entered the Black-White College, he, too, had received an Epochal Transmission from Immortal Northwalker.

“In the past, you received the sword-intent transmission from senior Northwalker, right?” The short old man laughed. “Right.” Immortal Diancai stared down carefully towards that fur-clad youth. His gaze was extremely focused; he was carefully weighing this youth.

“Who is he?” Immortal Diancai finally spoke out. The short elder knew

that Immortal Diancai was asking about the fur-clad youth below, and he shook his head and said, “How should I know? I just came out from seclusion and happened upon him by chance, and so I immediately called for you. However, today is the day in which our College accepts new disciples; I imagine this youth should be a newly admitted student.”

Immortal Diancai nodded slowly.

All the higher level members of the Black-White College knew that ever since Immortal Diancai had entered the school and received the sword-intent transmission from ‘senior Northwalker’, and had learned about the life of senior Northwalker, he had felt incomparable respect and veneration for him. Diancai had considered himself to be Northwalker’s apprentice, and had frantically sought out any information he could find about Northwalker, as well as regarding his sword techniques...he had even visited all of the places which his revered master, Northwalker, had ever travelled to, in the hope of finding his tracks.

During this process, Immortal Diancai had grown more and more powerful, to the point where he could be described as the second coming of senior Northwalker. All the Immortals of the Black-White College acknowledged him as the one amongst them with the highest chances of becoming a Celestial Immortal.

“Well? Will you take him as your disciple?” The short elder chortled, lifting his gourd of wine up and taking two drinks. This junior apprentice-brother Diancai of his had never before accepted a disciple, because junior apprentice-brother Diancai had once said...only someone who had also received the Epochal Transmission of senior Northwalker’s sword-intent could become his disciple.

Immortal Diancai had trained for less than a thousand years. During the course of these thousand years, there had been quite a few who had sensed the unusualness of that line of characters, but none of them were capable of receiving the sword-intent transmission.

“He’s not bad.” Immortal Diancai nodded gently. “Only...I still need to watch him to determine whether or not I will take him as a disciple.” The

short old man shook his head. "Your standards really are high."

Immortal Diancai didn't respond. He continued to focus on the fur-clad youth below. He watched in silence. But suddenly...

"Rumble..." The glowing characters on the stone wall suddenly flared with blinding brilliance, to the point where the characters themselves, formed from light, seemed to leap out of the stone wall. One character of light after another hung there in midair. 'Hand' 'Wield' 'Three'...

Every single character radiated with blinding light; they seemed to be characters, but every single stroke of the characters contained the shadow of a sword, as though these were words formed from countless sword-shadows.

"The [Three-Foot Sword] technique. The complete [Three-Foot Sword] technique." Immortal Diancai's eyes were shining, and a look of shock and delight was in them.

"That sword technique...that's the legendary [Three-Foot Sword] technique!" The short old man didn't appear to be the slightest bit relaxed as well, and his eyes were filled with shock, surprise, and ardor.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

At virtually the same instant, three more figures suddenly appeared in the night sky. One was an old man with a long beard, a crown on his head, and who had an extraordinary bearing; when he strode forward, it was as though an emperor was walking past, naturally capable of commanding a realm. The second was a childish-looking boy who radiated an inexhaustible frigid aura, and whose eyes appeared incomparably ancient. The third was a tall, muscular man whose entire body was covered with chains.

The three of them all stared downwards.

"The [Three-Foot Sword]."

"The [Three-Foot Sword] has once more revealed itself to the world!"

"Our Black-White College has recruited yet another incredible disciple."

The three stared downwards towards Ning, their eyes filled with anticipation and excitement. Immortal Diancai and the short elder also stared downwards. The five of them didn't say a single word.

Swoosh!

Suddenly, yet another figure appeared in the air. This was a white-robed youth who was incomparably handsome, almost devilishly so. The white-robed youth appeared, then immediately said respectfully, "Greetings, Uncle-Masters."

"Don't say a thing." The short elder immediately gestured at him. The white-robed youth nodded. Although he had the exalted status of headmaster of the Black-White College, in front of these five, he still showed the respect due to seniors. He stood there obediently, not saying anything further.

.....

'Hand' 'Wield' 'Three' 'Foot' 'Sword' 'Kill'...the characters formed from sword-shadows hung there in the air, radiating light. But suddenly, all of the glowing characters flew straight towards Ning's eyeballs.

Ning shut his eyes. And then, in the same instant, the glowing line of words atop the stone wall suddenly dimmed, becoming ordinary looking and no longer emanating any radiance or aura whatsoever. Perhaps, when the time was right and when yet another disciple capable of receiving its sword-intent transmission appeared, it would once more display its extraordinariness.

"It's over." The short old man laughed. "Senior Northwalker's complete [Three-Foot Sword] has been transmitted to this kid."

"Right. The complete [Three-Foot Sword]." The bearded, crowned elder sighed with emotion as well. "How many years has it been? The last time the [Three-Foot Sword] emerged was nearly thirty million years ago. Finally, yet another disciple has inherited the complete [Three-Foot Sword]."

"The [Three-Foot Sword]...it exterminated countless vile demons, and

killed until the heavens grew dim and the earth turned dark. It killed so many that even the entire Grand Xia Dynasty was shocked, and it even slaughtered a path out of our very world of existence.” The tall, muscular man who was covered in those bizarre chains spoke in a low, rumbling voice as well. His eyes were filled with eagerness as well.

They were all Immortals, but the difference in their power was great. Immortal Northwalker was at a level where he was no weaker than a Celestial Immortal, and where even some Celestial Immortals would be afraid of him. For someone like him...killing an ordinary Loose Immortal or Earth Immortal was as easy as slaughtering a chicken.

This was precisely why, despite the passage of countless years, the Black-White College continued to feel the utmost of veneration for Immortal Northwalker. In fact, he was the only person in the entire history of the Black-White College whose status was considered to be even higher than that of the Celestial Immortal they had produced.

“The [Three-Foot Sword].” Immortal Diancai spoke very slowly. “According to the legends, it has a total of nine stances; the first six stances are recorded in the secret annals of our Black-White College, but the final three stances...they were what Immortal Northwalker truly relied on when he roamed the world and dominated it with invincibility. They were impossible to record down through words and pictures; the only way one can receive them is through the profounder-than-profound Epochal Transmission.”

“This child has the heart of a Sword Immortal.” The bearded elder stared downwards at Ning. “In addition, his Dao-heart is incomparably firm and pure, and his soul is very powerful. Only one who fulfills all three criteria can receive a technique such as this [Three-Foot Sword].”

The juvenile-looking boy nodded. “In each generation, our Black-White College has a good number of disciples who have firm Dao-hearts and powerful souls, but the heart of a Sword Immortal...this is too rare, too rare.”

“The heart of a Sword Immortal represents the true essence of a

swordsman, that which stems from the heart.” The short old man said with a sigh, “In addition, being able to develop the heart of a Sword Immortal is a prerequisite for embarking on one of the Grand Daos, the Dao of the Sword.”

.....

“Junior apprentice-brother Diancai, are you going to accept this excellent disciple or not? If you won’t, I will,” the bearded elder said with a laugh.

The juvenile-looking boy’s eyes were blazing. “Junior apprentice-brother Diancai, I’ll take this disciple. Although he isn’t able to execute the [Three-Foot Sword] right now, it has already been imprinted onto his soul. Once he reaches the proper level, he’ll be able to execute it. I am quite eager to have the chance to cultivate a Sword Immortal who will be in possession of the [Three-Foot Sword].”

“Junior apprentice-brother Diancai...” All of them spoke out. But Immortal Diancai just glanced out of the corner of his eyes at the four. “I haven’t even taken a single disciple. Are you all going to fight with me over him?” The other four all laughed.

“Jadesea.” Immortal Diancai looked towards the white-robed youth. “Uncle-master.” The white-robed youth immediately nodded. Immortal Diancai chuckled, then asked, “Who is that young fellow below us?”

The white-robed youth, Daoist Jadesea, immediately responded, “He is one of the two disciples which our Black-White College has just accepted. His name is Ji Ning, and he comes from a minor tribe, the Ji clan, which lives in the Swallow Mountain region of our Stillwater Commandery. His parents are already deceased. Ever since he was young, he displayed astonishing, unparalleled talents, and at the age of eleven, he executed the Zifu Disciple, Bei Zishan, who was being pursued by the Raindragon Guard.”

“Then, because Immortal Firedragon made a breakthrough in the territory of the Ji clan and caused an elemental ore mine to appear, a local branch of Snowdragon Mountain sought to annihilate the Ji clan, but the

end result was that Snowdragon Mountain lost a Wanxiang Adept and more than twenty Zifu Disciples. The main reason why Snowdragon Mountain suffered such a catastrophic loss was this Ji Ning.”

“Afterwards, he became friends with Northmont Baiwei, who is of the direct, primary lineage of the Northmont clan. He engaged in a battle in the Carefree Caverns, and during the battle revealed that he was already at the level of comprehending a Dao Domain. He is currently sixteen years of age. The other person who entered our Black-White College, Mu Northson, is fourteen years of age.”

The five Immortals, upon hearing this information, all nodded. Ning’s growth rate was monstrous and astonishing in the ears of others, but in the eyes of these Immortals of the Black-White College, Ning’s growth rate was just decent at best. After all, they had all even seen quite a few reincarnated Immortals.

“This Ji Ning shall be my disciple.” Immortal Diancai glanced at the surrounding individuals. “My four senior apprentice-brothers, please support me in this.”

“Haha.”

“I thought you’d never take on a disciple, junior apprentice-brother Diancai.”

“I won’t fight with you over him. You have gained the deepest level of insight regarding the swordplay of senior Northwalker; if you don’t teach this boy, who will? If I taught him, wouldn’t I hamper his progress?”

And so, over the course of this conversation amongst Immortals, Ning’s future master had been determined, just like that.

Chapter 24: The Grand Admissions Ceremony

It was late at night.

There were only two disciples of the Black-White College located in the plaza which held the Black-White Diagram. Ji Ning slowly opened his eyes. Although it was a late night in the twelfth lunar month, and it was extremely cold, Ning's heart was filled with a scorching heat. He stared at the words left behind by Immortal Northwalker, hidden amongst the countless words left behind on the stone wall, and his emotions continued to fluctuate for a time.

“My sword is the joyous sword, the sword of passion, the sword which exterminates all injustices! It is better to live passionately for a day, than to live a century while stifled.”

Ning still remembered with perfect clarity that vision of that silver-haired old figure, who seemed to be as exalted as the heavens themselves. He clearly remembered that heaven-surging sword-intent, clearly remembered that sword technique. All of these things had been deeply engraved in his heart!

“What level of swordcraft is this? Comparing my swordcraft to it would truly be like comparing the light of a firefly to the brilliance of the full moon.” Ning's heart was surging with emotions, and his eyes were filled with boundless admiration.

Suddenly...Ning's ear twitched. He immediately turned, only to see a white-robed figure walk over from afar.

“Eh?” Ning was startled. Today, the only two new students should have been himself and Mu Northson. Aside from the two of them, who else would come here in the dead of night?

The white-robed youth walked over from afar, and as he did, Ning felt as though endless, boundless waves were slowly surging towards him in a crushing flow. The entire world seemed to have transformed into waves...

but when they reached Ning, things grew clear once more. There were no waves at all...just that white-robed youth walking towards him.

“How terrifying.” Ning felt alarm in his heart. Although there was no oppressive, dominating aura, the sense of danger which this white-robed youth had given him wasn’t one whit inferior to that which Northmont Blacktiger had given him. In addition, this white-robed youth was handsome to the point of being devilish.

Ning clasped his hands in a salute. “This junior, Ji Ning, pays his respects to you, senior.” Before coming, Ning had already received an intelligence report from Northmont Baiwei regarding the school. Based on the information in that report, Ning already had an idea as to who this person was.

“My Daoist title is ‘Jadesea’,” the white-robed youth said. “I am fortunate enough to hold the position of headmaster for now.” Ning responded with respect, “Greetings, Headmaster.”

The headmaster of the Black-White College, ‘Daoist Jadesea’, was naturally a truly influential and powerful figure within Stillwater Commandery.

“Headmaster, junior apprentice-brother Northson is...” Ning looked towards Northson, who was still absorbed in meditation in front of the Black-White Diagram, seeming to be drunken or dazed.

“No need to disturb him,” the headmaster, Daoist Jadesea, said while shaking his head. “You are the one I’ve come to visit.” As he spoke, a scroll appeared in front of Daoist Jadesea. He then extended his arm, even more pure and jade-white than most women’s, and the scroll floated towards Ning. Ning respectfully accepted it.

“After reading it, you will understand.” Daoist Jadesea looked towards Ning. “As the Epochal Heir of Immortal Northwalker, you must not be indolent. Remember. After finishing reading this scroll, destroy it.” After speaking, Headmaster Daoist Jadesea turned and departed, quickly disappearing from Ning’s field of vision.

Ning stood there, stunned. Epochal Heir? Could not be indolent? Ning

immediately unfurled the hide-bound scroll; this scroll was made from the hide of an ordinary animal, but the words and information atop it instantly drew Ning's attention.

"Immortal Northwalker?" A look of delight appeared on Ning's face. He had been wanting to learn more regarding this Immortal Northwalker. The upper part of this hide-bound scroll described Immortal Northwalker's experiences as he grew in power, as well as some notable events he had been involved in. Ning was completely engrossed and mesmerized by the information within.

This was a true legend. The legend which the entire Black-White College held in the greatest respect. "In acting, one should act as senior Northwalker did," Ning murmured softly to himself.

When senior Northwalker acted, he did so in a manner which could be described in two words; 'straightforward' and 'passionate'! That was the only thing he cared about, to the point where, when he saw the disciples of a supreme clan acting in sinful, wicked ways, he annihilated them all in his anger and even destroyed their souls. This resulted in him being pursued and attacked by this supreme clan, a pursuit which lasted for centuries. Immortal Northwalker had even been forced to flee from this major world, but over the course of this pursuit, he had grown more and more powerful. Afterwards, when he had returned, many of the powerful experts of that supreme clan were killed or injured, and in the end, they had been forced to lower their heads and admit defeat, paying reparations and reconciling themselves to him.

"I wonder which supreme clan it was," Ning mused to himself. "This scroll didn't record their name; clearly, they don't want for this matter to become public. Most likely, this was part of the reconciliation process that occurred."

Given what a massive battle this had been, clearly, that supreme clan was truly incredible as well. At the same time, it also demonstrated how straightforward and passionate Immortal Northwalker's actions were. He truly did act to exterminate all injustice!

The middle of the scroll recorded a dialogue. A junior disciple posed a query to Immortal Northwalker: “Countless vile actions were being carried out in this vast world; if one always went to exterminate evildoers, how could one possibly ever kill them all?”

Immortal Northwalker had responded thusly: “The number of sins and wicked deeds carried out in this vast world are numerous beyond count, and I can’t be bothered to take charge of all matters in this world. Any injustices that I personally encounter, however, I will naturally exterminate, and so return joy and passion to myself.”

His meaning was simple and clear. If he didn’t personally encounter injustice, he couldn’t be bothered with it. But if he did? That would ruin his mood...and he would exterminate it.

“He truly did live a carefree life, where he did as he pleased.” Ning felt admiration for the man.

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After reading through the records of Immortal Northwalker, Ning turned to the bottom part of the scroll, which began to introduce the [Three-Foot Sword]. The [Three-Foot Sword] had a total of nine stances, and was the supreme technique which Immortal Northwalker had used to stun the entire Grand Xia Dynasty. It was the distilled essence of his million-plus years of experience, and it was so powerful that even Immortal Northwalker himself was unable to completely record down this technique in a manuscript for transmission to later descendants.

The Dao Repository Vault of the Black-White College only held the first six stances of the [Three-Foot Sword]. To this very day, no one was capable of recording down the final three stances in written form.

However, those words left behind on the stone wall had been personally penned by Immortal Northwalker. Only when there was a sword-intent resonance would an Epochal Transmission occur, and could the [Three-Foot Sword] be transmitted.

“So that’s how it works. Occasionally, a later disciple of the Black-White College will receive an Epochal Transmission, but even if they do, it’s quite

rare for them to obtain the complete sword technique. The last time a complete sword technique was transmitted was more than thirty million years ago.” Upon reading this, Ning finally understood how astonishing a gain he had just reaped.

Ning also now understood why Headmaster Daoist Jade Sea had given him this scroll. It was precisely because of how important the [Three-Foot Sword] was; if some of the enemy powers were to learn that the Black-White College had produced yet another genius who had gained the complete legacy of the [Three-Foot Sword], they would probably use any means at their disposal to ensure that this genius would fall early on.

Thus, this news absolutely could not be publicized. But of course, he could still use the [Three-Foot Sword]; after all, the Dao Repository Vault had the secret manuals for the first six stances of the [Three-Foot Sword]. As for using the seventh stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], if the situation called for it...then there was no need to keep the secret any longer. Once one possessed the power of the seventh stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], then one would already be standing at a peak of power. After all, the seventh stance was already something which even Immortal Northwalker was unable to commit to paper; from this, one could imagine how powerful it was.

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Two more hours passed. Only now did Northson completely come to his senses.

“Wonderful, absolutely wonderful.” Northson’s eyes were blazing as he turned to look at the nearby Ning. He immediately called out in excitement, “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, this Black-White Diagram is simply too helpful in training. I feel as though I have made tremendous, tremendous progress in the Dao of Constructs.”

But immediately afterwards, Northson realized something; Ning had awoken before he did. Most likely, he hadn’t gained as much from the Black-White Diagram as Northson himself did. This made Northson feel rather embarrassed.

“Indeed, I’ve gained much,” Ning said with a laugh. “It’s late. I imagine that it will be dawn soon. Junior apprentice-brother Northson, it’s time to get some rest. Two days later, we’ll go to the Headmaster’s Palace.”

“Right.” Northson nodded.

“Also,” Ning warned, “These words left behind by Immortals all have quite a history and are worthy of you viewing.” Northson walked the Dao of Constructs; naturally, he wouldn’t have the heart of a Sword Immortal and wouldn’t be able to receive the legacy of the Immortal Northwalker. However, although Ning had received the Epochal Transmission of Immortal Northwalker, it could very well be that there were other legacies left behind by other ancestors of the school on the stone wall.

“Right. It’s almost dawn. I’ll come here in the future and read through them slowly,” Northson said with a laugh.

Whoosh! Whoosh! The two left, one on a wooden boat, the other on an Azure Dragon construct. They each headed towards their own abodes.

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In the blink of an eye, two days passed. As had been predicted, on the second and third days, there were no applicants who were qualified to become formal disciples of the Black-White College! Thus, this year, the only new disciples of the Black-White College were Ji Ning and Mu Northson.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Ning and Northson were streaking through the air above the Black-White College like two streaks of light, moving directly towards the Headmaster’s Palace.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Northson’s eyes were filled with eagerness. “Today, we will receive black-white pellets. We’ll be able to enter the Dao Repository Vault and exchange it for Ki Refining techniques or secret Immortal techniques. In addition...we will be paying our respects to our masters. We don’t even know who they will be yet.”

“Right. I wonder who will be my master,” Ning mused in a soft voice.

Master. For an Immortal practitioner to acknowledge a master was completely different from how he had acknowledged Blindfish to be his master when learning archery as a child. Archery was just the technique of an ordinary mortal, but your master on the Immortal path...what they passed down to you would help you on your road to becoming an Immortal. The value of this benevolence shown was far greater, and most likely the relationship between a master and apprentice would persist for centuries or even millennia.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Ning and Northson landed in front of the Headmaster's Hall. Quite a few formal disciples had already gathered together within the Headmaster's Hall, at least a hundred or more. They were casually chatting amongst themselves, and all of them had extraordinary demeanors.

When Ning and Northson entered the palace, quite a few of the formal disciples turned to glance at them. Most of them had kind looks in their eyes, and they nodded slightly, signifying greetings.

"It seems only part of the formal disciples of the Black-White College have come," Ning mused to himself. "It makes sense. Immortal practitioners can't always be staying within the school; I imagine many are outside."

Each year, there would be a grand ceremony for admitting new disciples. But sometimes Immortal practitioners would enter closed-door meditation for decades; thus, attendance at this sort of ceremony was not too important. Those who could come would; if one couldn't, it didn't matter much. Still...for most, as long as they weren't engaged in any pressing matters within the school, they would still come and pay their respects at the Headmaster's Palace.

"The Headmaster is coming," someone suddenly called out. Ning and the others immediately turned to look. A white-robed youth was descending from midair, and there were multiple figures behind him. All of them were Primal Daoists of the Black-White College; this entire group of Primal Daoists descended en masse.

“According to the normal customs of the Black-White College, new disciples of the College will generally take on Primal Daoists as masters,” Ning mused to himself. The Primal Daoists of the Black-White College were not like those of ordinary schools; some of them had such astonishing power that they were comparable to ordinary Immortals. Thus, being able to become a disciple of a Primal Daoist of the Black-White College was quite a fortunate affair.

“I wonder which one of them will be my master?” Ning swept his gaze past all of the Primal Daoists, including the headmaster, Daoist Jadesea. He began to privately guess at which of them it would be.

Chapter 25: Daoist Title, Darknorth

Daoist Jade sea sat on high in the headmaster's seat, staring downwards towards the Primal Daoists, who had lined up into two rows. Beneath the palace was a group of Wanxiang Adepts and Zifu Disciples.

Within the Black-White College, the various disciples were primarily divided into three generations of status. The Zifu Disciples and Wanxiang Adepts were considered to be of the same generation of status, and could refer to each other as junior or senior fellow disciples. This was because it was extremely easy for any of these Zifu Disciples to reach the Wanxiang Adept level.

Primal Daoists were on a higher level. Immortals, in turn, had the highest status. Generally speaking, when disciples like Ji Ning met with an Immortal, they would address them as 'Patriarch', while when they met with a Primal Daoist, they would address them as 'Uncle-Master'. But of course, if one was able to take on an Immortal as one's master, they would naturally refer to that Immortal as 'Master'. Still, in addressing other Immortals, one would still use the term 'Patriarch'.

Generally speaking, status amongst Immortal practitioners was determined by strength and power, and they each befriended people on the same level of power.

"Everyone," Daoist Jade sea said, seated atop his high chair, his voice echoing throughout the hall. "Our Black-White College has taken on two new disciples. The skinny, fur-clad one on the left is Ji Ning."

Ning gaped. Skinny? Well, it made sense; it wouldn't be appropriate to refer to him as the 'youth' either.

"The one on the right, the even skinnier one who is dressed in white robes, is named Mu Northson," Daoist Jade sea said.

Northson blinked as well. Even skinnier?

The hundred-plus disciples within the palace all began to laugh, and looks of amusement had appeared on the faces of the Primal Daoists as

well. Clearly, they all knew what sort of a character their headmaster, Daoist Jadesea, was.

Daoist Jadesea grinned as he looked towards Ning and Northson as well. “The people present within this palace today consist of a portion of the disciples of our Black-White College. Many are either in closed-door meditation or wandering the world. In the future, you will meet them all. From today onwards, you are all members of the Black-White College. We must be of one mind and one heart; it is forbidden for members of the college to engage in fratricide.”

“Understood.” Ning and Northson both immediately acknowledged these words. Daoist Jadesea continued, “Mm. Then let us begin the Oath of Blood.”

Ning and Northson glanced at each other. They immediately stretched out one finger from their right hands, and a drop of fresh blood emerged from their fingers.

“Let our heart’s blood bear testament, and let the Dao of the Heavens stand witness. I, Ji Ning (Mu Northson), willingly and freely join the Black-White College. As disciples of the Black-White College, I shall obey the rules of the Black-White College...”

A nameless, ancient aura began to circulate throughout the hall. Nobody else said a word; the only ones speaking were Ning and Northson, and their voices echoed within the grand palace.

An Oath of Blood, sworn to the Dao of the Heavens!

This was a mighty oath that absolutely could not be foresworn. This was also the reason why it was extremely rare for someone to betray their school in the Grand Xia Dynasty. If one did betray one’s school, even before the school came to punish them, the punishment of the Dao of Heaven would have already slain the traitor. But of course, if the school had wronged the disciple, or if it had expelled the disciple, then it would no longer be the disciple’s fault.

Since every single disciple was willing to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens, it was still quite fair.

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After hearing the swearing of the Oath of Blood to the Dao of the Heavens, Daoist JadeSEA nodded in satisfaction. “Excellent. You have now formally joined our school. Since you have joined us, you need to choose your Daoist titles. Each of you can choose a title you like.”

Ning and Northson both began to ponder this. A Daoist title...for example, Daoist JadeSEA’s Daoist title was ‘JadeSEA’, and Immortal Firedragon’s Daoist title was ‘Firedragon’.

“If you don’t wish to choose a Daoist title, you can use your own given name as your Daoist title,” Daoist JadeSEA said with a laugh. “There are some disciples who are accustomed to using their own names and unaccustomed to Daoist titles. There are thus quite a few who use their own names.”

“My Daoist title shall be ‘Twinwood’,” Northson suddenly said. Daoist JadeSEA nodded lightly. “Twinwood? Very well.” He looked towards the nearby Ning next. “Ji Ning, what about you?”

Ning said slowly, “My Daoist title...let it be Darknorth.”

“Very well.” Daoist JadeSEA nodded. “Since your Daoist titles have been chosen, let the elders of our Black-White College discuss amongst themselves who will take you as their student. If you aren’t willing, you can speak out at this time.”

“Understood,” Ning and Northson both said. Unwilling? What sort of a joke was this? As long as there was no enmity between them, generally speaking, as long as an elder was willing to be their master, the disciple would not refuse to be their student.

“Mu Northson.” Suddenly, from amidst the crowd of Primal Daoists near Daoist JadeSEA, a white-haired, baby-faced old lady suddenly spoke out. She looked at Northson, a hint of benevolent love in her eyes. “I heard that you walk the Dao of Constructs. I, JadeFINE, have also gained quite a few insights into the Dao of Constructs. I wonder if you would be willing to accept me as your master.”

Ning's heart thumped. Jade? According to the intelligence report which Northmont Baiwei had provided him, Daoist Jade had the highest degree of understanding of the Dao of Constructs in the entire Black-White College.

"Your disciple is willing." Northson respectfully fell to his knees. "Your disciple pays his respects to you, Master." Daoist Jade smiled, then nodded. "Mm."

Ning turned to look at the various Primal Daoists up ahead. Which one of them would become his master? Which one? But Daoist Jade and the other Primal Daoists didn't say a single word.

"Hrm. Strange. Why aren't any of them accepting junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning as their disciple?"

"Right. None of our uncle-masters are saying a thing."

The other disciples were secretly chatting amongst themselves. But Daoist Jade, seated above them, suddenly turned to stare towards the outside of the palace. A figure had appeared within the doorway to the palace; a black-haired, black-robed man was walking in. His gaze was both stately and fierce, and as soon as he stepped into the palace, it was as though the entire palace had been steeped into darkness. All of the disciples turned to stare at this man.

"My respects to you, Patriarch." Many of the disciples quickly spoke out. A few of the others were a bit lost; clearly, they didn't recognize this man. Still, they hurriedly imitated the other disciples in bowing respectfully. As for Ning and Northson, they followed the crowd in bowing as well.

"My respects to you, Uncle-Master." The Primal Daoists in front all called out respectfully as well. "Uncle-Master." Daoist Jade rose as well.

The black-robed, black-haired man's figure had instantly become the center for the entire palace. It was as though the entire world was revolving around him.

"Ji Ning." The black-robed, black-haired man looked towards Ning. "Are you willing to become the senior disciple under my tutelage?" Ning was

shocked. As soon as this man had spoken, Ning had immediately realized who he was.

The intelligence report Baiwei had provided had very little information on the various Immortals in the palace, with just a few lines of information for each; after all, the information on the Immortals was very highly classified, while the report Baiwei had provided him consisted of fairly open secrets. Thus, there was just a very simple introduction regarding Immortal Diancai..

Immortal Diancai: An Earth Immortal of the Black-White College. Highly specialized in swordplay. No disciples to his name.

Of the living Immortals of the Black-White College, Immortal Diancai was the only one who had never accepted any disciples. Upon hearing the words, 'senior disciple under my tutelage', Ning immediately understood who the person before him was.

If he didn't apprentice himself to this man, then who?

"Your disciple is willing." Ning fell to his knees, respectfully kowtowing in a ritual manner. "Your disciple, Ji Ning, pays his respect to you, Master."

"Mm. Follow me." A rare hint of a smile was on Immortal Diancai's stern face. Nodding to the others and saying a few words, he immediately left the hall, and Ning hurriedly followed after him.

As for the other disciples in the hall, they all stared in astonishment. An Immortal had taken a direct disciple? This was extremely rare. Only the most monstrously talented of their generation had been accepted by one of the Immortals as a disciple, and all of these monsters were rumored to actually be reincarnated Immortals.

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The clouds swirled about Immortal Diancai and Ning as they flew at high speed towards an estate. They entered the estate, then into the main hall.

Immortal Diancai sat down atop his jade bed. As for Ning, he stood there to one side, incomparably respectful. He could tell that Immortal

Diancai was normally quite a stern, taciturn person.

“In my entire life, the person I hold the most admiration for is senior Northwalker,” Immortal Diancai said. “I once swore that I would not accept any disciple who did not receive the sword-intent transmission from senior Northwalker. As for you, not only did you receive his sword-intent transmission, you even inherited his legacy, the complete [Three-Foot Sword]. Even I don’t know anything at all regarding the final three stances of this technique.”

Ning just listened respectfully. Given that even the headmaster knew about this matter, for his own master to know of this was only natural.

“The only ones who know that you inherited the complete legacy of the [Three-Foot Sword] are myself, Jadesea, and the other Immortals,” Immortal Diancai said. “Thus, you cannot reveal it either.”

Ning said respectfully, “Your disciple understands.”

Immortal Diancai looked towards Ji Ning. “You should know that in our Black-White College, if you wish to gain a top-tier Ki Refining technique or top-tier divine ability, you have to use black-white pellets to trade for them.” Ning nodded. The black-and-white book he had read earlier had described these things.

If one wished to acquire the divine ability, ‘Heavenly Transformation’, one needed a certain number of black-white pellets. If one wanted to gain a certain Ki Refining technique, one would also need a certain number of black-white pellets. If one wished to acquire a technique for their spirit-beast, one would still need to use black-white pellets to trade for it!

Black-white pellets were rewarded to disciples by the school. For example, if one reached the Dao Domain level, one would be rewarded with black-white pellets. If one became a Wanxiang Adept, one would also be rewarded with black-white pellets. Upon becoming a Primal Daoist, one would receive still further black-white pellets. If one joined the Raindragon Guard, one would be bestowed black-white pellets...

In short, the better one’s performance was, the more black-white pellets the school would bestow. Naturally, this would allow one to gain access to

ever more profound techniques owned by the school.

“Has your soul reached the ‘divine sense’ level?” Immortal Diancai asked. Ning couldn’t help but feel shocked; he had never revealed this before.

“Receiving the complete [Three-Foot Sword] legacy places enormous strains on the soul. In the past, virtually every single person who ever acquired the complete [Three-Foot Sword] legacy was a reincarnated Immortal whose soul was at least at the ‘divine sense’ level,” Immortal Diancai explained.

Ning said respectfully, “Your disciple’s soul has indeed reached the ‘divine sense’ level, but as for being a reincarnated Immortal...it seems your disciple...’

“After having drank Granny Meng’s Elixir, you naturally will have forgotten the memories from your previous life.” Immortal Diancai shook his head. “However, given how powerful your soul is, even if you aren’t a reincarnated Immortal, you must have encountered a tremendously great karmic event.”

Immortal Diancai fell silent for a moment, then started to muse to himself. “You’ve just entered the school, so you can receive the basic reward of a thousand black-white pellets. You have reached the Dao Domain realm, so you can be rewarded with another thousand black-white pellets. Your soul is at the divine sense level, and so you can be awarded two thousand black-white pellets. As your master, I can bestow you with another two thousand black-white pellets. Thus, you have a total of six thousand black-white pellets.”

Immortal Diancai said seriously, “Since you have already received the complete legacy of the [Three-Foot Sword], in the future, you will definitely be forced to use it. Thus, when you go to the Dao Repository Vault, you must trade for the first scroll of the [Three-Foot Sword]. The [Three-Foot Sword] is the swordplay which has secured the foundations of our Black-White College; thus, even the first scroll will cost you two thousand black-white pellets.”

Ning was speechless. He clearly had inherited the entire legacy of the [Three-Foot Sword], but in order to hide it, he would actually have to go trade for the first scroll of the [Three-Foot Sword]? And the price was two thousand black-white pellets! So this was the reason why his master had bestowed him two thousand black-white pellets.

“As for your Ki Refining Technique...remember, you absolutely must select a Ki Refining Technique that you can use to train all the way to the Immortal level,” Immortal Diancai said. “As for divine abilities and sword techniques...choose as you see fit.”

“You can go now. Go directly to the Dao Repository Vault and withdraw your black-white pellets and your liquefied elemental essence. Afterwards, go choose your Ki Refining techniques, sword techniques, divine abilities, and what-not.” Immortal Diancai concluded, “If there is something you cannot comprehend, come ask me.”

“Yes.” Ning bowed with respect. And then, he departed, heading directly to the Dao Repository Vault.

Chapter 26: Within the Dao Repository Vault

The morning sun rose, and the light of the dawn shone upon the entire Black-White College.

Whoosh. Ji Ning, mounted atop his flying boat, was soaring through the skies. Soon, he saw a majestic, towering vault beneath him. This was the edifice which, within the Black-White College, had a status that was not inferior to the Black-White Diagram's; the Dao Repository Vault!

Whenever the disciples of the Black-White College wished to learn top-tier Ki Refining techniques, divine abilities, or secret arts, they would come here.

A large, muscular man, dressed in a beautiful set of armor, was currently seated next to a stone table, holding an exquisite goblet of wine and enjoying it.

Ning landed on the ground. "My respects to you, Uncle-Master," Ning said with a bow. "Oh?" The large, muscular man glanced sideways at Ning. "You are the new disciple, Ji Ning?"

"Yes," Ning said. This large, muscular man was one of the Dao-Protectors of the Vault, a position generally given to Primal Daoists. "Here are six thousand black-white pellets." The large, muscular man waved his hand, and a black jade bottle flew out towards Ning.

Ning accepted it and filled it with his elemental ki. Within this jade bottle, there really was a veritable mass of pellets, all of which were black and white in color.

"Here are fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. For disciples of the third generation, every ten years, they will receive this amount of liquefied elemental essence." The large, muscular man tossed another jade bottle to Ning. "Alright. You've collected your black-white pellets and your liquefied elemental essence. You can go in now."

Two bottles; one a dark jade color, the other an emerald jade color. They

were used to store six thousand black-white pellets and fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence, respectively.

“The Black-White College lives up to its reputation,” Ning said to himself with a sigh. “Someone like me, a third generation disciple, will receive fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence each decade. Doesn’t that mean that every century, I will receive five hundred kilograms? An ordinary Earth-ranked magic treasure is only worth around a hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence, while most Heaven-ranked magic treasures are worth just ten thousand taels or so.”

The five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence which disciples of the Black-White College received each century were already enough to trade for a Heaven-ranked magic treasure. But of course, no one would be so stupid as to save them all up; this liquefied elemental essence was meant to help them rise in power by allowing them to not need to waste a great amount of time in slowly absorbing energy from nature.

“Thank you, Uncle-Master.” Ning immediately strode into the Dao Repository Vault.

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There were a total of three levels to the Dao Repository Vault. As soon as Ning entered the first level, he felt as though he had entered a sea of books. One enormous book shelf after another could be seen, with countless numbers of books placed on them. At first glance...Ning dared to guess that there had to be more than a million books here, and the vast majority of the books which lined the largest walls and shelves had a single large character on the sides: ‘Technique’!

“Techniques!” Ning mused to himself, “The Dao Repository Vault has three levels. The first level focuses on techniques, the second on arts, and the third on miscellaneous things.”

The word technique, in this case, referred to refining techniques, such as Ki Refining and Fiendgod Body Refining techniques.

The word arts referred to secret magic arts used by Immortals and Fiends. They included ingenious ways of using power, and included the

‘divine abilities’ of Fiendgods, the ‘sword arts’ of Sword Immortals, the ‘forbidden techniques’ which one could use in a crisis, the ‘evasion arts’ one could use when fleeing...all techniques which relied on special tricks and applications of power were classified as skills.

As for miscellaneous, they consisted of things that were not classified with the first two. Constructs, formations, venomous pests, refining magic treasure, refining magic pills, poisons...

“Master said that I absolutely must trade for the first scroll of the [Three-Foot Sword], as well as a Ki Refining Technique that can be used all the way up to the Immortal level.” Ning didn’t hesitate at all, immediately beginning to search through the first level of the Dao Repository Vault.

Ki Refining Techniques were divided into Immortal-rank, Heaven-rank, Earth-rank, Mortal-rank, and so on. Immortal-rank...this meant that this was a Ki Refining Technique that could be used to train all the way up to the Celestial Immortal level.

“All the way up to Celestial Immortal?” Ning sighed with emotion. “Although supposedly one can use Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Techniques to train all the way up to the Celestial Immortal level, even the Black-White College has only produced a single Celestial Immortal in its entire history. Even Immortal Northwalker and those other outstandingly talented figures were unable to become Celestial Immortals. The path to becoming a Celestial Immortal is indeed as difficult as Judge Cui described; the tribulations one must face are boundless.”

Ning continued to search carefully. Soon he found, deep in the depths of the Dao Repository Vault, a black, wooden table. Atop it, there were a total of twenty nine golden books arranged in a row. This table had a single character carved on its side – Immortal!

“Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Techniques?” Ning hurriedly picked up a golden book. This book was named [Samgha Sutra of Ascending to Heaven]. This was just a simple, abridged tone; after all, an Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique was definitely one of the most important, foundation-establishing texts for a school. It absolutely would not be

permitted for it to be leaked to the outside world.

“This first scroll of the [Samgha Sutra of Ascending to Heaven] actually costs 1500 black-white pellets.” Ning was secretly speechless. Turning his head, he saw that atop the tall bookshelves, there were rows on rows of Earth-ranked Ki Refining Techniques, and all of them were complete copies, not abridged ones...

“These are so cheap, just a hundred black-white pellets,” Ning mumbled to himself. Suddenly, a voice rang out by his side. “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.”

Ning turned to look. He saw, from afar, a white-robed youth who had just arrived; his junior apprentice-brother, Mu Northson. Northson was clearly quite excited. “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, there really are very many Ki Refining Techniques here.”

“The school has existed for so long. How can it not have many techniques?” Ning replied. And then, the pair of fellow disciples began to once more earnestly search for their own Ki Refining Techniques.

An hour passed.

“I’ll choose this.” Ning picked up a golden book; it was the Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique, the [Flowing Watersource]. The first volume could be purchased for 1500 black-white pellets. The Ki Refining Technique which Ning had trained in since he was a child was the [Water Element Art]; after having established his Zifu, of the Five Elements, he was naturally most suited to water-attribute techniques.

“When adding the cost of the first scroll of the [Three-Foot Sword], which I have to acquire, I need to pay 3500 black-white pellets. I have another 2500 black-white pellets I can use.” Ning began to ponder to himself. He needed to acquire a technique for Uncle White. He also needed to acquire a divine ability. He also needed the later parts of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram].

“Uncle White is at the early Zifu stage; he is in urgent need of a Ki Refining Technique. In addition, of the Five Elements, he too is most suited to water. This [Flowing Watersource] is very suited to him as well.”

Ning continued to ponder.

Although he had just chosen a single copy of the [Flowing Watersource], if he wanted to let Uncle White train in it as well, then he would have to pay another 1500 black-white pellets! If he didn't...then that would mean that they had stolen the technique, and an Immortal-ranked technique at that. This was a tremendously grave crime, and the Oath of Blood he had sworn to the Dao of the Heavens, by itself, would deliver a punishment that would probably shatter Ning's soul.

"I have a thousand more black-white pellets remaining." Ning instantly felt as though he didn't have enough black-white pellets to spend. But what he didn't realize was, no one else would be willing to spend such a fortune on a spirit-beast.

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A short time later, within the first level of the Dao Repository Vault, Ning was able to find the books focusing on Fiendgod Body Refining. He also found the later scrolls introducing the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique, the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram]; the so-called 'second scroll' to the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram].

The second scroll of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] also had nine stages to it. It consisted of the tenth, the eleventh, the twelfth...all the way to the eighteenth stage.

These levels corresponded to the Wanxiang Adept, Primal Daoist, and Void stages.

Upon reaching the eighteenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram], one would undergo a tribulation. If one successfully endured that heavenly tribulation, one would become an Empyrean God!

As for Ki Refiners, once they overcame their tribulation, they would become Celestial Immortals!

Empyrean Gods and Celestial Immortals...these were two different branches.

"A hundred black-white pellets? So cheap." Ning, upon seeing the price,

couldn't help but sigh in relief. "Although it will let you train all the way to the heavenly tribulation, it only costs a hundred black-white pellets. It really is the most easily acquired technique."

It was the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique. It was also the most easily acquired technique. And, in turn, it was the most difficult technique to learn.

.....

Ning took a copy of the [Flowing Watersource] and a copy of the second scroll of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram], then left the first level of the Dao Repository Vault and went to the second level. The second level was also filled with countless bookshelves.

"Arts!" Ning took a deep breath. These were the secret arts of Immortals and Fiends. They represented ways in which one could apply the Dao, divine abilities, sword arts, spells, forbidden techniques, evasion techniques, and more. All of these were classified as 'arts'.

"Divine abilities." The first thing Ning did was to head to the bookshelves which held the records on divine abilities. Divine abilities... these were extremely rare. Even his mother's Yuchi clan had only been in possession of a single divine ability, the [Windwing Evasion] technique.

"So few. So expensive!" Ning finally found the shelf which contained the divine abilities, but the entire shelf only had five abridged books. In other words, despite the passage of countless years, the entire Black-White College was only in possession of five divine abilities! They were even more rare than Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Techniques!

These five techniques were the [Heavenly Transformation], [Divine Thunderbolt Eye], [Myriad Hibernating Venoms], [Three Heads, Six Arms], and [Eye of the Luminous Heart].

"[Three Heads, Six Arms]?" Ning's eyes instantly lit up. The [Heavenly Transformation] technique was the most common divine ability; generally speaking, all top-tier schools and sects had it. As for the other three divine abilities, [Divine Thunderbolt Eye], [Eye of the Luminous Heart], and [Myriad Hibernating Venoms], these were divine abilities which, according

to rumor, some major powers would often use.

“[Three Heads, Six Arms]; it seems to be ordinary in effectiveness, but in reality, once one reaches the late stages of this divine ability, it grows tremendously powerful,” Ning mused to himself. Humans only had two arms; even though, by relying on their divine power or elemental Ki, they could coalesce additional arms, these arms couldn’t possibly compare to true arms.

But the [Three Heads, Six Arms] technique...once this divine ability was executed, one truly would gain four additional arms and two additional heads. The power of these four additional arms was comparable to that of one’s true arms; it would be as though three Ji Nings were linking hands against a single foe! It must be understood that just by wielding twin swords, one’s power would increase multiplicatively; with six swords joining together in an attack, the power would reach a truly ridiculous level.

.....

Five divine abilities. After seeing them, a look of lust was in Ning’s eyes. [Three Heads, Six Arms] was extremely famous; naturally, there was a reason for that. And thus, the price of the first scroll alone was three thousand black-white pellets.

The [Heavenly Transformation] technique was the most commonly seen technique, but when trained to the later stages, it was also capable of unleashing astonishing levels of power. Its first scroll cost five hundred black-white pellets.

The [Myriad Hibernating Venoms] was also a true killer technique; the first scroll to this divine ability cost five thousand black-white pellets.

The first scroll of the [Divine Thunderbolt Eye] cost two thousand black-white pellets as well.

As for the [Eye of the Luminous Heart], the first scroll cost five thousand black-white pellets.

“This is too...” Ning had to grit his teeth and pick up the abridged

version of the [Heavenly Transformations] technique. As for the other four divine abilities, there was no way for him to acquire them at all. The cost of these techniques was vastly greater than the cost of those Immortal-ranked Ki Refiner Techniques. But it was only reasonable; these were divine abilities, incomparably precious.

.....

Ning, those books in hand, continued forward through the second level in search of even more unusual 'arts'. After searching for a long time...

"Found it." Ning finally found, atop a bookshelf, three golden books. The entire shelf only had these three golden books atop it; apparently, the value of these books wasn't at all inferior to those divine abilities.

Ning immediately picked up one of the golden books. Atop the cover, there were three words: "Soul" "Shaker" "Art". [Soulshaker Art]!

This was precisely what Ning was searching for; an art which would allow him to use his soul to engage in an attack. This was an extremely rare type of art.

Chapter 27: Training in the Still Room

The [Soulshaker Art] was something only a person with a divine will could use; it could be used to shake the opponent's very soul. If the enemy's soul was particularly weak, it might even cause their soul to be extinguished.

"This is it." Ning nodded. "Previously, during the recruitment, Uncle-Master Wu Xiu used the [Soulshaker Art] to cause hundreds of Zifu Disciples to all fall down from midair. Something only capable of being used at the 'divine will' level? I've already reached the 'divine sense' level!"

Ning continued to read carefully. It really was alluring. Given the power of his soul, once he used the [Soulshaker Art], he would be able to deal with the vast majority of Wanxiang Adepts! After all, it was virtually guaranteed that only Primal Daoists would have souls at the divine sense level! Ning's soul was so very powerful that if he were to use the [Soulshaker Art], he would naturally be able to dominate the vast majority of Wanxiang Adepts.

"Two thousand black-white pellets?" When Ning saw the price of this art, he immediately shook his head.

There were a total of three books on this shelf. One was the [Soulshaker Art], one was the [Soulcharmer Art], while the other was the [Soulslayer Art]!

Of the three, the [Soulshaker Art] and the [Soulcharmer Art] only required someone's soul to be at the divine will level in order to learn them. The prices for them were two thousand and three thousand black-white pellets, respectively.

As for the [Soulslayer Art], this was truly used to extinguish an opponent's soul, an art used for divine souls to engage in battle. In addition, it required a person to be at the divine sense level to learn it...and in terms of rarity, it was even rarer than divine abilities! To trade for it, one would need ten thousand black-white pellets.

"All I can do is stare at it and drool." Ning laughed, then shook his head.

He immediately turned to go look at the other arts available.

.....

The Dao Repository Vault was divided into techniques, arts, and miscellaneous. Virtually all of the skills available were extremely powerful or particular sinister. There were also all manner of brilliant sword arts as well.

Ning had, in total, just six thousand black-white pellets. Which should he purchase? Which shouldn't he purchase? He had to gain a clearer understanding.

.....

Six full hours later, Ning finally departed from the third floor of the Dao Repository Vault, then walked out of the vault.

"You've chosen?" The tall, muscular Dao-Protector gave Ning a glance.

"Right." Ning nodded, but he couldn't help but turn to look backwards. It really was...really was...he really wished he had a few hundred thousand black-white pellets and was able to pick from those skills as he pleased. There were all sorts of Immortal and Fiend techniques that were simply too mysterious and godlike, as well as some truly powerful evasive techniques that made Ning truly tongue-tied. Only now did he truly understand how deep the roots of the Black-White College were.

Unfortunately, he only had six thousand black-white pellets, and he absolutely had to choose the first scroll of the [Three-Foot Sword], as well as an Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique.

"Let me take a look," the Dao-Protector said. Ning handed over the abridged books in his hands. The Dao-Protector, after accepting them, immediately saw that on top was the first scroll of the [Three-Foot Sword]. He immediately said with a frown, "The [Three-Foot Sword] is one of the techniques which secured the legacy of our Black-White College, and its power is absolutely astonishing. But to comprehend it...will be extremely, extremely hard. It is a bit too early for you to start training in the [Three-Foot Sword]; in addition, it will cost you two thousand black-white pellets

to trade for it.”

Ning felt helpless. He didn't want to choose it this early either, but his master, Immortal Diancai, had ordered him to do so. He had no one to blame but himself for having received the legacy of senior Northwalker.

“The [Lesser Five Elements Sword]?” The Dao-Protector, upon seeing the second book, immediately nodded. “The [Lesser Five Elements Sword] is also one of the top five sword techniques of our Black-White College, and it is unfathomably deep and profound, allowing one to start at a basic level but progressively comprehend more. It is very suitable for someone who wishes to focus on the Dao of the sword, and it costs eight hundred black-white pellets as well. Actually, I recommend that you only trade for the [Lesser Five Elements Sword], and temporarily set aside the [Three-Foot Sword] for now.”

“The [Flowing Watersource]. An Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique. Not bad.” The Dao-Protector nodded, then raised his head and looked towards Ning. “You made up your mind? These are all you want? You won't change your mind?”

“I will not.” Ning shook his head. There were many arts that were quite enticing to him, but Ning had given them up. He had even given up acquiring the second scroll of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram]. After all, training in the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] required one to absorb the energy of the Solar Star and the Lunar Star...Ning was currently only at the seventh level. To reach the ninth level, he would still need a long period of time. During this period of time, he would probably be able to acquire more black-white pellets.

“Even if I'm not able to acquire the second scroll of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] in the Black-White College, I can join the Raindragon Guard and acquire it there, or even purchase it from other places,” Ning mused to himself. The second scroll of the [Crimsonbright Nine Heavens Diagram] was fairly easily obtained.

As for those various sword arts...Ning had spent a long period of time analyzing them in the Dao Repository Vault. Given that his divine ability,

the [Starseizing Hand], was with him, so long as his swordplay was strong enough, his own power would naturally rise.

For fleeing, he had the [Windwing Evasion]. In a true battle of divine abilities, he already had the [Starseizing Hand], and so wasn't in a rush to obtain other divine abilities. What truly mattered was his Ki Refining Technique and his sword arts!

The [Lesser Five Elements Sword] was the most suitable technique for him, because he had a deep level of insight into three of the elements already; water, wind, and fire.

"2000 black-white pellets for this, 1500 for this, and 800 for this. The three come to a total of 4300 black-white pellets." The Dao-Protector looked at Ning. "Give me the black-white pellets, and I'll go get the copies for you."

Ning shook his head. "Not only am I going to train in the [Flowing Watersource], I am going to give my spirit-beast a copy as well."

"Your spirit-beast?" The Dao-Protector was shocked. "You are going to give your spirit-beast such a good Ki Refining Technique? That costs 1500 black-white pellets. Moreover, you have just started training; this is a critical moment for you. With 1500 black-white pellets, you can purchase many powerful secret arts to protect yourself. There's absolutely no need for you to spend so much effort on your spirit-beast. Just have him wait a bit longer; in a few decades or in a century, purchase it for him then. Or, just give him a slightly weaker Ki Refining Technique."

As this Dao-Protector saw it...Ning was a formal disciple and a truly monstrous talent. For him to give a spirit-beast such a great benefit was a rash, hot-headed act.

Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Techniques! Something like this could only happen within the Black-White College. If they were roaming in the outside world, even if a Zifu level monster risked his life for centuries, he would still find it virtually impossible to acquire an Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique.

"My mind is decided," Ning said. The Dao-Protector shook his head.

“Alas. Why must you be such a fool?” Ning did not respond, but his gaze told the Dao-Protector that his decision was an incomparably firm one.

“Fine, then,” the Dao-Protector said, rising to his feet. “I will help you find these copies. Give me those 5800 black-white pellets.” “Mm.” Ning nodded, watching as the Dao-Protector entered the Dao Repository Vault.

Uncle White...Uncle White wasn't just his spirit-beast. More importantly, he was family. If Ning were to acquire a large pile of divine abilities and secret arts, but give nothing to Uncle White, he truly would feel terrible in his heart! In addition, even if he was able to trade for a large number of secret arts, he would still need a large amount of time and energy to focus on training in them.

“I will spend my time focusing on comprehending this [Lesser Five Elements Sword],” Ning mused to himself. The [Flowing Watersource] was something he could simply train in. The [Three-Foot Sword]? His current level of swordplay was somewhat lacking; he couldn't even execute the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]. The only thing he could slowly spend time on comprehending, for now, was the [Lesser Five Elements Sword].

.....

The Black-White College. Darknorth Peak.

Ning was standing atop a flying boat in the air, and he sent the boat charging downwards as he entered Darknorth Peak.

“Uncle White,” Ning called out as he landed into the courtyard. Whoosh. A large white hound bounded over from nearby. It was the Whitewater Hound. “Ning, son. You have apprenticed yourself? Which one is your master?”

“Immortal Diancai,” Ning replied, his face covered with joy. The Whitewater Hound's face became filled with delight and astonishment as well. “An Immortal?” Prior to this, he had chatted with Ning and also made guesses regarding which Primal Daoist would be Ning's master.

“Uncle White, this is the Ki Refining Technique I traded for you, the

[Flowing Watersource],” Ning said. “You absolutely cannot reveal this technique to any outsiders; if you do, the Oath of Blood sworn to the Dao of the Heavens will punish you, and your soul will be destroyed.”

“I know.” The Whitewater Hound nodded. Formal disciples, retainers, spirit-beasts...all those who lived within the Black-White College had to swear the Oath of Blood to the Dao of the Heavens! After all, retainers and spirit-beasts all had the chance to learn some top-tier techniques.

“Take it,” Ning said, handing over the [Flowing Watersource], a thick, coiled up booklet. “This is the first scroll; you can train with it directly to the peak Primal Daoist level. After we reach the Primal Daoist level, we can go trade for the second scroll.”

“Thank you for troubling yourself, my boy Ning.” Although the Whitewater Hound had never heard of this technique before, he could guess that given Ning had purchased it for him, it definitely wouldn’t be poor.

Ning chuckled. “Uncle White, I’m going to go train.” Swoosh! Ning’s heart was pumping mightily right now, and he was filled with eagerness. Naturally, he charged directly towards the underground quiet room he had prepared for himself.

Darknorth Peak had many buildings atop it; naturally, it also had some private rooms that were used for Immortal cultivators to train in. All of these private rooms had grand formations set up around them that were linked up to the grand formation which protected the entire Black-White College as a whole. Once one entered secluded meditation, not even Immortals could hope to barge in.

“Creaaaaak!” The stone door slammed shut.

Within the ten foot wide stone room. The ceiling up above was filled with many luminous jewels; these jewels naturally weren’t as extravagant and costly as the ones in the Carefree Caverns, but they were still extraordinary. The light from them made it so that the stone room was perpetually kept bright by the light of the jewels.

Ji Ning sat there in the lotus position atop his jade bed. The runes

inscribed onto the jade bed had the effect of calming one's heart. "[Flowing Watersource]!" Ning flipped through the [Flowing Watersource] in his hands, spending a full hour reading it as he completely memorized the entire book. The memories of Immortal practitioners were exceptionally good. For someone like Ning, who had reached the 'divine sense' level, they could actually flip through all the memories in their soul which they had acquired since they were a child, just like flipping through a book.

"Whoosh." A flame appeared out of nowhere within Ning's hand, and it burned the [Flowing Watersource] to ash. An Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique like this definitely was not permitted to be revealed to the outside world. Thus, upon finishing reading this technique, one had to destroy it. Thus, killing a disciple of the Black-White College in order to gain some top-tier techniques was completely impossible.

"Let's begin." Ning waved his hand, and a jade green flask landed on the floor before him. He opened the bottle, and a dense elemental aura wafted out. The green jade bottle had fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence within. Originally, Ning had used up just five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence in order to break through from the peak Xiantian level to the early Zifu level, and had also solidified his base as an early Zifu level.

"Absorb." Ning opened his mouth, and instantly, the liquefied elemental essence began to surge out from the green jade bottle and enter Ning's mouth. As it did...it quickly distilled into vast amounts of elemental energy, which surged into his Zifu Violet Palace.

Within the boundless void of his Zifu Violet Palace. There was a lake there. "Rumble..." Suddenly, the entire Violet Palace began to shudder as an endless torrent of elemental energy surged inwards and was converted into elemental ki. The lake of elemental ki began to slowly expand in accordance with the method prescribed in Ning's [Flowing Watersource] technique, and it began to slowly swivel as well.

Splash...splash...it continuously swiveled, and as it did, it began to move faster and faster. Soon, the entire Zifu Lake had transformed into an

enormous whirlpool, causing the deep heart of the lake to grow deeper and deeper.

The formerly placid, flat lake had transformed into a whirlpool; it was like an awl, its depth having instantly increased hundreds of times over.

“BANG!”

A thunderous explosion. In the deepest part of the whirlpool Zifu Lake, a hole suddenly appeared, which ravenously began to produce new elemental ki. This hole was the ‘Watersource’ of the [Flowing Watersource]!

“Middle Zifu level.” Ning continued to absorb the liquefied elemental essence from the jade bottle, continuing to increase his power.

Rumble...

The deepest part of his Zifu Lake was now a thousand times deeper than it had been in the past. The absorption and transformation process was clearly much faster than it had been, and the elemental ki that was transformed and produced by the Watersource was purer than before as well.

“The late Zifu level!”

Chapter 28: Tradition

Ji Ning had already reached the Dao Domain level, and his highest level of accomplishments was in the water-element of the Five Elements. For him, comprehending the [Flowing Watersource] was naturally very easy. Although this was his first time training in it, he thoroughly understood the Zifu level portion of the technique, and even comprehended the majority of the Wanxiang level of the technique.

In other words, if he so chose, Ning could, at one breath, train straight to the Wanxiang Adept level. But of course, the prerequisite was that he had enough liquefied elemental essence.

“Rumble...” The elemental ki in his Zifu Lake was slowly swiveling. The waters of the lake were now swirling in a very slow manner, but the closer to the bottom, the faster the whirling motion was. At the very bottom of the lake, in the Watersource, the whirlpool was spinning with incredible force. As the amount of elemental ki in the Zifu Lake grew, the power of the whirlpool grew as well.

In addition, the Watersource grew deeper and deeper. The elemental ki it produced grew more and more pure as well!

After training for roughly an hour...with a rumble, the entire Zifu Violet Palace began to tremble. The vast lake of elemental ki's Watersource once more transformed, and the purity of the elemental ki once more skyrocketed.

“Peak Zifu level.”

Within the vast Violet Palace region, the turbid waters of the lake continued to slowly expand. However, in terms of quality, the elemental ki had already reached the ultimate level possible at the Zifu Disciple level; there was no way to increase it any further. The only thing possible was to constantly increase the quantity of ki and expand it in size.

.....

Within the still room. The bright jewels continued to gleam brilliantly.

Ning, seated on the jade bed in the lotus position, opened his eyes and glanced at the emerald jade bottle placed before him. He nodded slowly. “I spent nearly forty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence, and managed to surge all the way to the peak Zifu Disciple level as a Ki Refiner. Only, to break through from the peak Zifu level to the early Wanxiang level, and while using a top-tier Ki Refining Technique...the amount of liquefied elemental essence that will be needed is quite shocking.”

The Wanxiang ‘Myriad Manifestations’ level was an extremely unusual level. Some of the Manifestations possessed by Wanxiang Adepts were merely those of countless stars gleaming in a night sky. But some Manifestations, such as those of Daoist Mu Xiao or Daoist Xu Li, had a brilliant moon amidst the sea of stars. Thus, the Manifestation technique they demonstrated was that of a grand moonlight hand!

However...

According to legend, top-tier Manifestations would generate trillions of stars, the brilliant moon, and the blazing sun, all at the same time! And only the truly supreme Manifestations could, during the peak Wanxiang stage, have the ‘Jade Rabbit emerge from the brilliant moon, the Golden Crow emerge from the blazing sun’.

The emergence of the Jade Rabbit, the appearance of the Golden Crow.

This, and this alone, symbolized that one’s foundations were perfect. This was the so-called ‘foundation of a Celestial Immortal’. If you didn’t reach this stage, there was no way you could become a Celestial Immortal at all.

But where did the supreme Manifestations come from? In truth, they relied on the practitioner having built up an extremely large ‘Zifu Lake’ during the Zifu level. The Zifu Lake is the fundamental foundation for an Immortal cultivator; the deeper and wider the lake is, the deeper the practitioner’s elemental ki foundation would be, and the more astonishing a Manifestation they would be able to create.

“Some poor-quality techniques will result in a Zifu Lake that is both shallow and small. Upon reaching the peak Zifu level, they won’t even be

able to expand the size of the lake; they won't have any hope of becoming Wanxiang Adepts." Ning sighed to himself. That was exactly the case for his own Ji clan; their techniques were simply too poor, and the Zifu Lakes that they were able to create were correspondingly weak to the point where they could never break through to acquire Manifestations!

The Manifestation of the Stars was the weakest Manifestation.

The Manifestation of the Bright Moon was on a slightly higher level.

The Manifestation of the Sun and the Moon was the best Manifestation.

And, for the Jade Rabbit and the Golden Crow to appear during the peak Wanxiang Adept level was proof that one's foundation was perfect.

"Based on the recorded experiences of disciples of the Black-White College regarding the [Flowing Watersource]," Ning mused, "Upon reaching the peak Zifu level, if one absorbs a further 250 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence, then one will gain the Manifestation of the Sun and the Moon. If one absorbs 400 kilograms before one breaks through to the Wanxiang Adept level...then at the peak Wanxiang level, the Manifestation will produce the Jade Rabbit and the Golden Crow."

This was one of the benefits of having a sect; the experiences of the forerunners would guide the latecomers in knowing what to do.

Fortunately, this was an Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique. If it was a poorer technique...even if one had unlimited amounts of liquefied elemental essence, one wouldn't be able to absorb it all. It would be useless.

.....

He had spent two hours to reach the peak Zifu Disciple level. Next, Ning flipped through the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] tome.

This was how things were in supreme schools, for disciples the schools cared about. Training was as simple as this. Once they reached a certain level of insight, the school would make it so that they could save as much time as possible in training, allowing them to focus their attention on comprehending the Dao, analyzing sword arts, divine abilities, etc.

“Sword arts!” Ning’s eyes were gleaming, and a hungry look was in them. Ever since he had reached the Dao Domain level, the sword arts manuals of the Ji clan had become useless to him; his level of insight was simply too high.

To a true Sword Immortal...an incredibly deep and profound sword art could let them unleash incredibly great power in battle. Although Ning was only at the Dao Domain level, if he focused on comprehending sword arts, he could gain insights into sword arts which were on a higher level than he himself was at.

“The [Lesser Five Elements Sword]! One of the top five sword arts in the entire Black-White College, something which even Immortals would be willing to study.” The cost of this sword arts manual was close to that of a divine ability manual; from this, one could see how powerful it was.

Ning gently flipped through the pages. Stretching out his fingers, he formed them into the shape of a sword, testing the movements. These still rooms inside the Black-White College were specially designed for its formal disciples to train in, and the formation protecting these rooms were linked together with the grand formation which protected the entire College. Even if one tested out techniques within...as long as one was not an Immortal, there was no way one could possibly damage the still rooms in the slightest.

“Crackle.”

“Slash.”

Ning read while testing out the movements, completely absorbed in this sword technique. He felt as though he were back in his youth, when he was training in the [108 Swords of the Gods and Demons] for the first time. Back then, his father taught him, but this time, Ning analyzed everything by himself.

.....

As Ning was analyzing this sword technique. Within the estate located on another mountain peak within the Black-White College.

“Junior apprentice-brother Bladask, junior apprentice-brother Bladask,” a voice rang out. “Senior apprentice-brother Bu. Please, come in.”

A calm voice rang out from within the estate. Instantly, an azure-robed, long-haired man drifted in. This estate had a Zifu Disciple and some ordinary mortals within it, all of whom saluted. They naturally couldn't compare in status to a formal disciple of the Black-White College.

“Might I ask why you have come here, senior apprentice-brother Bu?” A white-robed youth walked over. It was Bloodrinker Bladask.

“Junior apprentice-brother Bladask,” the azure-robed man laughed, “I heard that during our recent recruitment, the mountain tunnel which you guarded was broken through, correct?”

Bladask's face sank. This was a humiliation for him! That time, Ning had forced him to use a sword formation to block. Given his proud nature, he naturally remembered the matter. Thus, when Ning and Northson had undergone the formal ceremony, he had not attended.

“Right,” Bladask said coldly. The azure-robed man laughed. “Junior apprentice-brother Bladask, don't be angry. I imagine you don't know this yet but...that Ji Ning is so talented that he has already been accepted by our College's Immortal Diancai as his first, senior apprentice.”

A look of shock appeared on Bladask's face. “Immortal Diancai?” Immortal Diancai was a Sword Immortal! As for Bladask, the path he walked was the Dao of the Sword as well. In the past, he had desired to become Immortal Diancai's apprentice, but formal disciples, upon entering the school, were generally apprenticed to Primal Daoists. It was very rare for Immortals to directly choose them as an apprentice. As time had gone on, they had all grown accustomed to this, and he felt that it was normal that Immortal Diancai had not taken him as a disciple. But this Ji Ning had actually become apprenticed directly to Immortal Diancai!

“What about it?” Bladask had a sharp look in his eyes. “His future level of strength will depend on himself.”

The azure-robed man nodded. “Right. Training depends on one's self. However, junior apprentice-brother Bladask, the reason why you lost to

Ning last time was only because you were only permitted to use a single flying sword. You weren't able to unleash your true power at all."

Bladask didn't say a word. In terms of power, he felt that he was far more powerful than that kid named Ji Ning.

"And, junior apprentice-brother Bladask, you should also know," chuckled the azure-robed man, "That our Black-White College has an unspoken custom; all new apprentices will be taught a lesson at the Dao Debate Palace."

Bladask nodded. The battles at the Dao Debate Palace were an extremely safe sort of sparring matches. The Black-White College's formal disciples loved to engage in this sort of battles against each other!

"All new disciples were supreme geniuses in their former organizations, and are accustomed to being arrogant. The Dao Debate battles...they can help these new disciples wake up. Help them understand a certain principle; that there is a heaven beyond the heavens, and that there are geniuses beyond geniuses." The azure-robed man laughed. "I wonder, junior apprentice-brother Bladask...would you be interested in having the chance to help that genius, Ji Ning, wake up and understand that in the Black-White College, he's nothing more than an ordinary figure?"

Bladask's eyes instantly lit up. After hesitating just a moment, he said in a cold voice, "I will only spar with Ji Ning!"

"There are quite a few other fellow disciples who want to fight," the azure-robed man said with a laugh. "What we need to do right now is to go invite Mu Northson and Ji Ning to a battle."

.....

Northson was currently standing atop his Azure Dragon construct, flying through the air towards his own residence. "The Black-White College really lives up to its name." Whenever he thought about the secret manual on constructs which he held in his hands, he felt a blazing fire in his heart. This manual held answers to many of the questions he had regarding the Dao of Constructs, and he had been completely absorbed by it.

Whoosh.

The Azure Dragon construct which Northson stood upon descended from the skies.

“Junior apprentice-brother Twinwood.” A blue-clothed maiden in front of his gate called out to him. “Who are you, senior apprentice-sister?” Northson remembered seeing this woman amongst the other formal disciples of the Black-White College; she had been with them during the grand initiation ceremony. Immortal practitioners had formidable memories; after having seen her once, he had firmly memorized her appearance.

The blue-robed woman laughed, “My name is Winterain. You can simply address me as senior apprentice-sister Winterain.” Northson said happily, “I don’t have a single servant yet, and thus ended up treating you discourteously by having you wait outside. Please forgive me, senior apprentice-sister.”

Seeing the way in which he acted, the blue-clothed woman felt a hint of goodwill towards Northson. She thus said, “Junior apprentice-brother Northson, I’ve come here to invite you to the Dao Debate Palace...”

“Dao Debate Palace!” Northson’s eyes instantly lit up. He had read the black-and-white book, and knew that the duels in the Dao Debate Palace were extremely safe. They had nothing to do with elemental ki, power, or magic treasures; what they competed in was comprehension regarding the Dao and the ways in which they would apply the Dao. This is why it was described as a ‘Dao Debate’. In addition, there would generally be stakes in these ‘debates’, such as black-white pellets or liquefied elemental essences.

“To be able to spar with you, senior apprentice-sister, is something I’ve been looking forward to,” Northson said eagerly. “Then let’s go,” the blue-clothed woman said.

“Alright.” Northson’s eyes were filled with an eagerness for combat. Geniuses all had their pride. In the past, they had never before met their matches. Although they knew that these old disciples of the Black-White

College were all extraordinary, in their hearts, the new students would still feel an eagerness to do battle.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The blue-clothed woman and Northson flew rapidly through the air, heading towards the Dao Debate Palace.

Chapter 29: Ji Ning's Early Insights Into the Sword

The towering Dao Debate Palace was located at the very top of a mountain peak, and the figures of quite a few people could be seen within it.

The Dao Debate Palace...it had always been the place where the disciples of the Black-White College enjoyed to gather at the most. These genius disciples, all of whom had arrogance bred into their bones, would often spar with each other here.

“Swoosh!”

A ray of light shot out from the Dao Debate Palace. Immediately afterwards, a blue-clothed maiden flew out after it. “Junior apprentice-brother Twinwood, junior apprentice-brother Twinwood!” The blue-robed woman was standing atop a giant flower basket, chasing after him at high speed.

“Senior apprentice-sister Winterain, why are you chasing after me?” Mu Northson, standing atop that Azure Dragon construct, had a look of rage on his normally bashful face. “This was what you all planned this entire time, wasn’t it? Hmph!”

The blue-robed maiden, Winterain, shook her head and said, “Junior apprentice-brother Twinwood, actually, you can’t blame your fellow disciples. In our Black-White College...throughout our history, each time a new disciple joins us, that person will taught a vicious lesson at the Dao Debate Palace. This has already become a tradition. Although it isn’t one of the laws of the College, it has been passed down for countless generations.”

“Teach a lesson to new disciples?” Northson stared at her. “If it really was just a lesson, why did the need to pretend to be on par with me at the start?”

“That makes the lesson a deep one, one that you won’t forget,”

Winterain explained. "It is to help you understand that there is a heaven beyond the heavens, and geniuses beyond geniuses! Actually, when I first joined the college, I suffered in a similar manner. This happens in each generation; every new apprentice-brother and apprentice-sister will suffer this lesson. It is meant to tamp down their pride. The elders of our College all tacitly approve of it."

Although Northson understood this principle, he was still only fourteen years old. In addition, the two Dao Debates he had just engaged in had caused him to lose two hundred black-white pellets and ten kilograms of liquefied elemental essences. Although it was just a small bet, his losses had still caused him quite a bit of heartache.

Northson clasped his hands and said, "Senior apprentice-sister, you actually gave me a veiled warning earlier. I was too rash and impetuous. However, there's no need to say too many words of reconciliation."

Swoosh! Northson, mounted on his Azure Dragon construct, departed at high speed.

"Alas." Winterain watched as Northson departed. She couldn't help but shake her head. Although she had gone to invite Northson to participate, the simple interactions she had with him had made her feel very well disposed towards this junior apprentice-brother of hers. But because this was a tradition...it wasn't appropriate for her to intervene in the Dao Debate Palace. At most, she could give a hidden warning. Fortunately, this time, he had only lost twice before giving up. If he had continued to duel, his losses would have grown increasingly dire.

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"A heaven beyond the heavens, and geniuses beyond geniuses!" Northson was seated on the rooftop of one of the houses in his estate, a jade bottle of wine in his hands. He raised his head, taking a swig.

"Cough, cough." Northson drank too quickly, and he began to cough. "In the future, I can't be too careless." Northson had slowly calmed down and regained his mental clarity. He had entered the Black-White College at the age of fourteen. Ever since he was young, he had never met a match. The

unconscious pride and arrogance he felt was what made him go spar against his fellow apprentices. He knew that the foes were very powerful, but he still felt he should be remarkable.

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Darknorth Peak. The still room. Ning was still completely absorbed by the [Lesser Five Elements Sword].

The [Lesser Five Elements Sword] was divided into a total of nine chapters: [Metal Element], [Wood Element], [Water Element], [Fire Element], [Earth Element], [Duality], [Tripartite], [Four Symbols], and [Five Elements].

Every single chapter allowed one to start from the basics, then go progressively deeper. The basic parts were even inferior to the “Rain Line” technique he had developed. But at a high level, this was a swordplay suitable for a Celestial Immortal!

Ning was carefully meditating on the [Water Element], [Fire Element], and the wind of the [Wood Element] parts [1]. These were the three aspects of the Dao which he had the deepest level of understanding about. As for metal and earth...he was lacking considerably in these two aspects. Naturally, he wouldn't squander his energy in analyzing them.

[tl: [1] = In the classical Chinese Five Elements system, wind is classified under wood.]

“Drizzling Rain!” Ning murmured to himself, and the sword-fingers of his right hand shot out. In midair, drops of rain began to appear out of nowhere. These raindrops struck downwards like meteors, slamming against the walls of the still room. A hazy, blurry light appeared on the walls of the room, covered with layers of mysterious runes.

“Success.” A look of joy appeared on Ning's face. “This skill is even more powerful than my ‘Rain Line’ technique.”

When developing new techniques, one could only develop techniques at the level of one's own enlightenment. But when learning, one could learn techniques that were at a higher level than one was currently at.

“Fire, water, wind. I’ve learned a total of seven major sword stances from these three parts. They are considerably superior to the sword techniques I developed myself, but the increase in power isn’t that noticeable.” Ning immediately flipped through the book in front of him, straight to the [Duality] part. “Only when these different insights regarding different Daos are merged together and unleashed in a single attack will the power of the attack increase explosively.”

The [Duality] part had a total of eighty nine different sword stances! For example, there were two Duality stances formed from joining the wind and the fire. There were two others formed from joining the earth and the fire. There were yet two more from joining metal and earth.

In short, the sword techniques developed from joining together the profundities of two different Daos were all included within this part, the [Duality] part.

Joining different Daos together truly could allow for the power of a technique to increase explosively. The power could jump to a whole new level! This is what ‘sword arts’ were! There were some Ki Refiners who could rely on exceptionally powerful sword arts and flying sword formations to kill same-level Fiendgod Body Refiners, even if they were in possession of divine abilities.

Sword arts, when trained to an ultimate level, were not at all inferior to divine abilities!

After another hour passed...

“Swish!” Ning’s right hand waved out once more, and a sword-finger shot out. Instantly, a ray of azure fire slashed through the air in the form of a fiery sword, seeming to vaguely shatter space itself. It slammed directly against the stone wall, and the glowing layer of runes atop the wall once more lit up.

“Success. The [Azureflame Duality Sword]!” A look of delight immediately appeared on Ning’s face. The [Azureflame Duality Sword] was a sword technique that contained the fusion of the True Meaning of Water and the True Meaning of Fire.

The power of this technique vastly outstripped Ning's former supreme attack, [Drizzling Rain]. As for the [Rain Line] technique he had developed at Swallow Mountain? That couldn't even be mentioned in the same breath. The power of this new technique was formed from joining together two completely different True Meanings of the Dao! But of course, the reason why he was able to develop it so quickly was because Ning had a high level of comprehension regarding the Dao to begin with, and his foundation was very solid. In addition, he had seen the Black-White Diagram, which had been of great help in inspiring him regarding how to join together different Daos. Naturally, he had only needed an hour in order to be successful.

This was a case of making a natural breakthrough after accumulating experience!

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Ning once again flipped to a new part of the book. The [Tripartite] chapter!

This chapter had a total of ninety two sword stances. There was a [Tripartite] sword attack based on the fusion of earth, metal, and fire; there was also one for the fusion of wind, earth, and metal.

As for Ning, however, without question, he was only capable of learning a very small part of the stances within; the sword technique formed from the fusion of wind, water, and fire. But there were a total of eight stances for this type of [Tripartite] sword attack.

It was dark. Only now did Ning leave the still room, jubilant. "I spent ten-plus years at Swallow Mountain, then comprehended the Dao within the Stellar Hall of the underwater estate...but I've never been able to acquire a truly powerful sword art. Now that I have obtained the [Lesser Five Elements Sword], I really am like a tiger who has gained wings." Ning laughed with delight and glee. He truly felt wonderful. This feeling of learning a truly powerful sword art really was wonderful!

"I have already learned two of the powerful sword techniques of the [Duality] chapter. Of the [Tripartite] chapter, I have learned one sword

technique as well.” Ning smiled to himself.

The [Tripartite] chapter represented the fusion of three different True Meanings of the Dao. This sort of multiplicative power resulted in a soaring rise in power! Fortunately, he had previously reached a bottleneck in his understanding of the Waterflame Lotus technique while meditating before the Black-White Diagram. With that as his foundation, he was able to, in four short hours, develop an extremely powerful sword technique from the [Tripartite] chapter – the [Tripartite Lotus Sword]!

The [Tripartite Lotus Sword], compared to Ning’s Waterflame Lotus, was like a different melody that was played with the same level of skill; they were two different approaches that led to the same result. However, it was actually even more profound and sharp! This was because Ning had only developed it after comparing the similarities between the two techniques.

“I imagine it will be very hard for my sword arts to improve significantly in a short period of time.” Ning understood this; after all, he only had some insights into three of the Five Elements, and was at most able to comprehend the [Tripartite] chapter. As for the [Four Symbols] and the [Five Elements] chapters, he was completely unable to understand them.

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In a single short day, as a Ki Refiner, he had risen from the early Zifu level to the peak Zifu level. His sword arts had consecutively risen by three complete tiers. After having learned a powerful technique from the [Lesser Five Elements Sword], the [Tripartite Lotus Sword], he had reached a limit. This caused Ning to naturally feel an incomparable joy in his heart.

“Ning, son.” The Whitewater Hound was walking over from far away. He sent mentally, “There is another formal disciple of the Black-White College within your estate who has come to pay you a visit. He has waited for a very long time.”

“A formal disciple? Here to see me?” Ning was surprised. He hurriedly walked towards the door; he couldn’t slight his fellow disciples.

He soon walked out and saw, from afar, an azure-robed man who was

standing leisurely with his hands clasped, staring at the crescent moon in the sky. The man seemed to sense Ning's footsteps, and he immediately turned to look, a smile appearing on his face. "Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth."

"Might I ask who you are, senior apprentice-brother?" Upon seeing this person, Ning immediately knew that he was a fellow disciple, because he had met this person in the Headmaster's Palace.

"My name is Bu Ying." The azure-robed, long-haired man laughed. "My Daoist title is Hawkfish."

"Senior apprentice-brother Bu, why have you come here?" Ning asked. The azure-robed man laughed loudly. "I saw how talented you appeared at the Headmaster's Palace, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, and then I saw you be accepted by Immortal Diancai as an apprentice...I imagine that you must be extraordinary, and so some of our fellow disciples wish to have a sparring competition with you."

"Competition?" Ning had a sudden thought. "A spar at the Dao Debate Palace?"

The azure-robed man laughed. "Right, the Dao Debate Palace. To engage in a discussion on the Dao at the Dao Debate Palace is a superb affair."

Ning was intrigued. The black-and-white book he had read had discussed the Dao Debate Palace; there was no danger at all in sparring within the Dao Debate Palace, and the disciples of the Black-White College all delighted in sparring there.

However...because he had read the intelligence report Northmont Baiwei had given him, Ning knew that the Black-White College had a certain tradition where some of the new disciples would be taught a lesson and made to suffer a loss at the Dao Debate Palace. In addition, the old disciples loved to watch this happen. The first reason was to help these newer disciples wake up and temper their pride. The second reason? They, too, had suffered this in the past.

"Very well." Ning's eyes lit up, and he laughed, "I, too, would deeply desire to spar against my fellow disciples."

“Hahaha.” The azure-haired man, Bu Ying, began to laugh. “Let’s go. Let’s go to the Dao Debate Palace.” The two immediately mounted on their magic treasures and soared into the skies, heading towards the Dao Debate Palace.

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Ji Ning and Bu Ying were flying through the night sky. Suddenly, a ray of light shot towards them from the ground below. “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” A white-robed youth, mounted on an Azure Dragon construct, came to greet them.

“Junior apprentice-brother Northson?” Ning was surprised. Northson was reeking of wine. What Ning didn’t understand...was that just before this, Northson had been drinking wine on the roof of his estate. When he saw Ning and Ying soar past, he had flown into the air as well.

Northson said frantically, “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, have you been invited to go to the Dao Debate Palace...”

“Junior apprentice-brother Twinwood!” The azure-robed Bu Ying frowned. But Northson continued frantically, “Don’t believe them. They are going to intentionally deceive you to make you lose black-white pellets and liquefied elemental essence to them. I lost to them; don’t be deceived by them as well.” Northson was clearly quite frantic, afraid that Ning would suffer in the same way he had.

The azure-robed man, Bu Ying, barked at him, “Junior apprentice-brother Twinwood, there are always some small stakes when one engages in a duel in the Dao Debate Palace. For someone to win, someone must lose. Can it be that you think things are only fair when you win? If everyone has to be a winner, then there’s no point to even going to the Dao Debate Palace.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Ning.” Northson was extremely nervous. “Junior apprentice-brother Northson,” Ning said reassuringly, “No need to say anything more. I know what is going on. If I lose, I can’t blame anyone else. However, I, Ji Ning, still have a certain degree of confidence in my heart.”

Northson was frantic. “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you...!”

“Let’s go.” Ning, who had read the intelligence report long ago, actually knew exactly what was going on.

“I’m going with you,” Northson immediately said. In his heart, he thought to himself that if he were by Ning’s side, he could at least try to help persuade Ning and ensure Ning didn’t lose too much.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The three flew towards the Dao Debate Palace at high speed. Soon, the towering Dao Debate Palace could be seen at the top of the mountain peak, shrouded by the night sky. Ning’s group of three charged downwards, moving towards the Dao Debate Palace.

Chapter 30: The Battle at the Dao Debate Palace

Ji Ning's group of three landed at the gates to the Dao Debate Palace. As they looked inwards, they saw that although it was night, the insides of the Dao Debate Palace were brightly lit, and the sound of calm laughter rang out from within.

"Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, I'll accept these hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence." The speaker was a white-robed man, who had a blood-drop pattern atop his white robes. It was Bloodrinker Bladask. Bladask had a hint of delight on his face; clearly, he was quite happy at having won a victory in the Dao Debate.

In front of him, seated in the lotus position, was a long-haired maiden dressed in water-blue robes. She arose and flew over, landing nearby and shaking her head. "Three years ago, I was able to beat you by a hair, junior apprentice-brother Bladask. I didn't expect that this time, I'd be defeated by you."

"Your junior apprentice-brother had to work very hard to just barely eke out a victory." Bladask, normally quite prideful, was currently quite humble.

"Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, when sparring, it's all about that hint of a chance at victory. You and junior apprentice-brother Bladask are comparable; only, junior apprentice-brother Bladask's attacks are just a hair sharper than yours."

"Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus..." The various men and women were chatting amongst themselves. At this moment, Ji Ning, Mu Northson, and Bu Ying entered the Dao Debate Hall, and they all turned to look towards them.

"Ninelotus?" Ning's gaze instantly turned towards that woman who had been referred to everyone as 'Ninelotus'. She was dressed in casual, water-

blue robes, and had long, black hair. Although her face could be considered beautiful, she was slightly less attractive than even Meng Xin. Only, this senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus had a certain graceful aura about her. She was like a fairy lotus, causing the fellow male disciples around her to unconsciously be drawn to her.

“Given her aura and demeanor, I imagine she must have an extraordinary background,” Ning mused to himself.

“Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus.” Upon seeing Ninelotus, Bu Ying’s voice went slightly higher. A smile on his face, he hurriedly said, “These two are the new disciples that just joined our Black-White College. This is Mu Northson, and this is Ji Ning.”

Ninelotus turned her gaze towards them, a hint of a smile on her lips. “I heard that during the day, junior apprentice-brother Mu Northson was defeated twice while sparring here at the Dao Debate Palace, and was so angry that he left.”

Northson was rather bashful to begin with. A hint of awkwardness immediately appeared on his face. “That’s only because he just entered the school, and has never before suffered a setback like that,” Ning spoke out.

Ninelotus looked towards Ning. “So you are Ji Ning, who Patriarch Diancai took on as his senior apprentice.” Ning nodded. “I am.”

The nearby Pu Yinig hurriedly said, “Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, you are the disciple of Immortal Diancai. Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, however, is the disciple of Immortal Fivecraze.”

“The disciple of Immortal Fivecraze?” Ning was surprised. “I just arrived back at the College tonight, and so I wasn’t able to attend the grand ceremony earlier,” Ninelotus said softly. “Now that you’ve arrived, junior apprentice-brother, are you willing to begin a Dao Debate?”

Laughing, Ning nodded. “I would very much like to spar against my senior fellow disciples.” Ninelotus laughed. “Then you have to be careful. I just lost a round myself, just now.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning!” A cold voice rang out. Ning turned

to look. The speaker was the white-robed Bloodrinker Bladask. Bladask's purpose for coming was to defeat Ning, and thus vent the anger in his heart. He hadn't expected to encounter Ninelotus, whom he had always admired very much. He had gone all out to defeat Ninelotus, in the hopes that this senior apprentice-sister would remember him in the future. Who would have imagined that after Ning arrived, he would immediately get into such an involved conversation with senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus.

"Senior apprentice-brother Bladask," Ning laughed. Bladask responded in a cold voice, "Do you remember our battle at the cave?" Ning nodded. "I do. That time, I wished to tell you my name, but you, senior apprentice-brother Bladask, refused to let me do so. You said that we'd never meet again."

The look on Bladask's face changed as he heard this. Ning laughed and continued, "I didn't even tell you my name, but it appears you already know it, senior apprentice-brother. Might I ask why you are calling for me?"

Bladask's gaze was filled with a cold light. "Dare you go onto the dais and debate the Dao with me?" Ning turned his head to look towards the giant Dao Debate Palace. "Go onto the dais and debate the Dao?" The giant palace was quite similar to a giant dining room from his past life. There were quite a few seats nearby, and in the center, there was an enormous battle arena. At the same time, at each side of the arena, there was a tall stone pillar. The Dao debaters would seat themselves atop the stone pillars and rely on golems to engage in a battle!

Ninelotus, standing to the side, said, "Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you must be careful. The person I just lost to was junior apprentice-brother Bladask." Bladask, hearing this, felt all the more jealous, and the cold light in his eyes grew increasingly sharp. "Dare you, or dare you not?"

"I've come here precisely to spar with my fellow disciples. Why wouldn't I dare?" Ning shook his head and laughed. "It's just a hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence."

“Haha, a hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence is just the smallest wager possible.” Bladask laughed coldly. “Black-white pellets are gifted to us by the College and are extremely rare. I’m willing to wager fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. Do you dare accept?”

Ning frowned. Bladask continued in his cold voice, “Oh, right. As a new disciple, you only have fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. I imagine that you probably wouldn’t be able to produce so much, junior apprentice-brother.” As he spoke, he waved his hand and produced an insignia. “This is an elemental mark from the Heavenly Treasures Mountain. It represents a thousand taels of liquefied elemental essence, which is to say, fifty kilograms. If you take it to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, you can trade it for fifty kilograms!”

“Dare you accept my wager?” Bladask looked towards Ning.

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The atmosphere instantly turned stiff. The other disciples immediately understood that there was something not quite right between Bladask and Ning. Previously, when they had battled Northson, they had only made the smallest of wagers; after all, nobody wanted to generate enmity and strife amongst their fellow disciples. For Bladask to increase the wager was a clear sign that he wanted to mistreat Ning.

If a new disciple were forced to take out fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence, wouldn’t that mean they wouldn’t have anything to train with?

But of course, they had no idea....that although Bladask originally did want to fight against Ning, he hadn’t planned on being so nasty. Only, he had noticed how engaged Ninelotus had been in her conversation with Ning. Ninelotus normally would say just a few meaningless phrases to him when he spoke to her, but towards Ning, she voluntarily spoke out to him. This made Bladask feel quite mistreated.

“How am I inferior to this Ji Ning? Why is it that senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus seems to treat him differently, from the very moment they met

each other? In terms of treasures, family heritage, power, or clan, this Ji Ning is inferior to me!” The look in Bladask’s eyes grew still colder.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning,” Ninelotus said. “You just joined the school. Let me lend you fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.” When he heard these words, the angry aura emanating from Bladask grew only more terrifying.

But Ning only laughed. “No need. Since senior apprentice-brother Bladask wishes to wager fifty kilograms, then I will accept.” Ning waved his hand, and several insignias appeared as well. “These are elemental marks of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain. They can be traded for a thousand taels as well.”

“Eh?” “Elemental marks of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain?” All of them stared at the elemental marks. Bladask had entered the school long ago, and had gone adventuring in the outside world; it was normal for him to have acquired some treasures and traded them to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain for elemental marks! But Ji Ning had just entered the school, and yet he was able to casually bring out a thousand taels as well... this was quite extraordinary. What none of them realized was that Ning had won these marks at the duel at the Carefree Caverns.

Although news regarding the battle at the Carefree Caverns had spread out, these disciples of the Black-White College knew very little about it. Of the Primal Daoists, only Wu Xiu knew a bit more about these matters.

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“A hundred black-white pellets and fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essences.” An old voice rang out. A white-haired old man who stood at the side of the Dao Debate Palace had spoken out. “Since you both accept, then let this be the wager.”

“Now, I’m going to ask the two disciples to each select their golem.” The white-haired elder continued to speak. He was a golem as well; he was responsible for some of the matters here in the Dao Debate Palace.

Ning and Bladask both immediately headed towards a side door; there were many golems placed within this side door to the Dao Debate Palace.

They entered a small hall. The white-haired elder pointed to the many golems; there were at least hundreds of them present. These golems were black, and looked like stone sculptures. “These golems have identical elemental ki cores. The energy they release will all be at the early Wanxiang Adept level. That way, those reincarnated Immortals who are within our school who are in possession of a divine sense won’t be able to use it to influence the battle significantly.”

Ning nodded. Divine sense was slightly superior to peak Zifu level power, but roughly the same as the early Wanxiang level. Even if it was used to control weapons, it wouldn’t impact the battle too much.

“These golems all come with their own weapons,” the white-haired elder continued. “They include flying swords, flying needles, giant warhammers...in short, all types of magic treasures are present! Choose a golem based on the type of weapon you prefer.”

Bladask was very quick to make his choice. He immediately walked towards a golem, placing it on the golem’s body and quickly binding it.

“I’ll go now. You can take your time in choosing.” Bladask gave Ning a glance, then immediately left. As for that golem, it transformed into a blur as it followed after him.

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The spectating disciples within the Dao Debate Palace, Northson and Ninelotus included, numbered eight.

“The wager is actually this large. A hundred black-white pellets is one thing, but fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence! Junior apprentice-brother Bladask is going a bit too far. Hazing the new disciples is one thing, but you can’t do it like this.”

“It is a bit much, I agree.” The fellow disciples were all chatting amongst themselves. Right at this moment, Bladask walked back from the side door, then leapt directly forward by more than three hundred meters before landing atop a stone pillar that was thirty meters tall. He took a seat atop the stone pillar. Swoosh! That golem also leapt up and landed within the battle arena, then quietly waited there.

“He chose the Polaris Golem.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Bladask really is being quite vicious; he actually chose the Polaris Golem which he is the most proficient with.”

“I wonder which golem junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning will choose.”

There were no differences in quality in the golems; the only question was whether or not one was accustomed to using them. If, for example, Ning were to choose a golem that used a giant warhammer, he wouldn't be able to unleash much of his power.

“He's coming out.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning is coming out.” They all looked over. Northson's eyes were filled with worry. As for Ninelotus, she stared carefully at Ning, her eyes filled with curiosity.

Ning walked out, a golem following him. Swoosh! Swoosh! Ning and the golem, in quick succession, leapt up then landed; Ning landed atop a stone pillar, sitting down, while the golem landed in the battle arena below, causing the arena to shudder slightly.

The two sat on their stone pillars, staring at each other from afar. Ning and Bladask's gazes crossed. They were roughly three hundred meters away from each other. The golems below them were roughly three hundred meters away from each other as well.

“Begin!” The white-haired old man barked.

Rumble...instantly, a barrier of clear water immediately appeared. It was an enormous, barrier-type grand sealing formation that completely sealed the entire arena. Northson and the others were all outside of it, while Ning and Bladask were within it.

“The Thousandwords Golem!” Bladask, seated in the lotus position on the distant stone pillar, gave it a glance, then snorted coldly. “He doesn't know his own limits.”

“I'd like to ask you for some guidance, senior apprentice-brother,” Ning called out in a high voice.

“Please.” Bladask shouted back.

The surrounding disciples all watched with bated breath. The newcomer who had been accepted by Immortal Diancai as his disciple, Ji Ning. Senior apprentice-brother Bladask, who had entered the school many years ago. Which of the two was the stronger?

Chapter 31: Shock and Awe (Part 1)

“Win. Win. Win.” Mu Northson stood outside the grand sealing formation, staring towards Ji Ning, who was seated on that distant stone pillar. His eyes were blazing with hope. “You have to win.” Prior to this, he had lost two rounds in a row. In his heart, he viewed himself and Ning as standing on the same side; they were both new disciples.

As for those old disciples, they were simply teaching the new disciples a lesson in accordance with that ‘tradition’. He lost; naturally, he now hoped that Ning would win a round and gain a bit of face for them, the two new students. In addition, this Bloodrinker Bladask had gone too far in making the wagers so large.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning is in for it now.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Bladask really did set a high wager. He showed no mercy at all.”

The old disciples were all chatting amongst themselves. But as for Ninelotus, she stood there, staring carefully at Ning, who was within the grand sealing formation. She said softly, “My fellow disciples, it’s too early to say such things. It’s hard to say who will win; junior apprentice-brother Bladask or junior apprentice-brother Darknorth.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Bladask entered the school many years ago. Can it be that he is inferior to Ji Ning?”

“Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, it isn’t very likely that Ji Ning will be able to win.”

All of the disciples present, Northson included, felt surprised at the words of Ninelotus. After all, Ninelotus, logically speaking, should be on the side of the old disciples.

“Just watch.” Ninelotus still had that calm smile on her face.

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Bladask sat there atop his stone pillar in the lotus position. He noticed that Ninelotus, standing outside the sealing formation, was paying more

attention to Ning. This caused his gaze to grow ever-colder.

“Once the protective surface armor of the golems you two are controlling has been broken, that means that you have lost.” The white-haired elder watched from afar while speaking out. Ning nodded lightly.

The golems were representations of themselves. Breaking through the golem’s armor, in a real battle, was something comparable to truly killing the enemy! Naturally, that represented defeat.

“Since you know the rules, then...begin!” The white-haired elder called out. Within the vast, empty space inside the sealing formation, the two golems simultaneously began to move. Ning controlled the Thousand sword Golem, while Bladask controlled the Polaris Golem.

“Swish!” “Swish!” The two golems retreated at the same time, pulling away from each other. Neither of them wished for their golems to be too close, because once their protective armor was breached, that would mean they had lost.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning! Watch out for this!” Bladask, seated on that distant stone pillar, let out a loud shout. Immediately afterwards, he began to control his Polaris Golem, which had seven flying swords on its back. A savage, baleful aura filled one of the flying swords which instantly shot out, filling the entire area nearby with a dense, bloody light.

“Ursae Majoris Warbreaker!”

“As soon as junior apprentice-brother Bladask attacked, he immediately used the Ursae Majoris Warbreaker. He really is filled with a killing intent right now.” The spectating disciples in the distance were all stunned.

The flying sword slashed through the skies, and as they did so, it was like an iron-blooded army was marching forth. A series of bloody lights flashed, and even the vague sounds of slaughter and warcries could be heard. They struck directly towards Ning’s Thousand swords Golem.

“He really does have quite a bit of a killing intent.” Ning sat there in the lotus position on his stone pillar. Seeing this, he just let out a soft laugh. “Let me extinguish that killing intent of his. Go.”

Clang!

One of the countless tiny swords on the back of the Thousandwords Golem instantly flew out. When it flew out, it was only the size of a sewing needle, but soon it expanded to the size of a palm. The flashing sword flew out...and as it did, the entire area became filled with flowing water, with the flashing sword light submerged within the water.

“Break!” Bladask’s face sank. That flying sword of his, filled with a boundless killing intent, didn’t give way in the slightest. It struck directly towards the flowing water. This Ursae Majoris sword...what it needed was its imposing manner! It couldn’t lose that!

The flying sword struck directly towards the flood of water. Splash! The flowing water was blasted apart, but the water then swirled and reformed around the flying sword, once more entrapping it. As the saying goes, one can swing a blade at water, but the water will still flow; even a blade that had been tempered a hundred times, when faced with this sword light that flowed with endless water, would become as weak as a finger.

The first blow was filled with energy. The second was weaker. By the third, there was nothing left. “Not good.” Bladask’s face changed slightly. He knew that Ning had blocked him with but a single flying sword.

“Formidable.”

“He used just a single flying sword to block junior apprentice-brother Bladask’s Ursae Majoris Warbreaker sword attack. I imagine that junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning isn’t much weaker than junior apprentice-brother Bladask.”

The azure-robed man, Bu Ying, said with a frown, “This is the ‘Flowing Water Sword’ of the [Lesser Five Elements Sword].”

“[Lesser Five Elements Sword]? Are you sure about that, senior apprentice-brother Ying?” The others all looked towards Bu Ying, puzzlement on their faces. They had all heard of the famous [Lesser Five Elements Sword], but they didn’t focus on swordplay...naturally, they didn’t understand the sword stances of the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] very well.

Bu Ying nodded. "I'm sure. I've meditated on the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] before. This technique is the 'Flowing Water Sword' technique within it. I didn't expect that although junior apprentice-brother Darknorth has just entered our school, he has already begin to gain insights into the [Lesser Five Elements Sword]."

Ninelotus just listened, smiling gently as she watched the battle.

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Bladask couldn't hear the conversation going on outside, but he could guess at it. Both sides had used just a single flying sword, but Ning had actually blocked him. How could he not feel humiliated? After all, he had joined the school many years ago.

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, receive my Polaris Direwolf Skyripper!" Bladask let out an angry roar. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The other six flying swords on the back of the Polaris Golem all flew out at the same time. The first flying sword flew back as well, and the seven flying swords instantly formed into a Polaris Sword Formation. Rumble...in midair, one enormous star after another began to appear. The seven giant stars formed into the shape of the Big Dipper, and then a flashing sword light began to expand rapidly.

"Howwwwwwwwwl!" At the core of this sword light, an enormous black wolf phantom actually appeared out of nowhere. The Direwolf raised its head, letting out an angry howl. And then, still howling, it charged straight towards Ning. It looked as though the Direwolf was bounding towards Ning, but in reality, those seven flying swords were launching a simultaneous attack.

"Go!" Ning's cold voice rang out. Eight more flying swords flew out from the back of the Thousandwords Golem. Along with the first flying sword, they instantly joined together into a simple 'Nine Palaces Sword Formation'. Ning had acquired the 'Nine Yang Sword Formation' in the underwater estate, and this formation contained quite a few profound mysteries as well. Although it wasn't as complicated as the [Lesser

Thousand Swords Formation], it was still extraordinary.

Ning had quite a bit of ability with regards to formations, and this 'Nine Palaces Sword Formation' was quite an excellent one as well.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Nine rays of sword light howled through the air, leaping forward to greet the giant, advancing Direwolf. As they flew over, the light of the nine swords suddenly flashed, then transformed into more than a hundred densely clustered sword shadows. These hundred-plus sword shadows then quickly transformed into drops of rain, and it was as though a hundred-plus meteors of rain were pummeling into the Direwolf.

Smash! Smash! Smash! Smash! Smash! Smash! The hundred-plus meteors of rain smashed downwards, every single drop containing awe-inspiring power.

"Not good." Outside the formation, the azure-robed Bu Ying leapt to his feet, his eyes filled with astonishment. "How could he have..."

Every single drop of rainwater contained awesome power. Rumble...the unceasingly destructive strikes actually completely smashed apart that baleful, heaven-menacing Direwolf, and it also blasted apart those seven flying swords.

"How can this be?" Bladask, who was seated on the stone pillar, controlling everything, had a completely different look on his face now.

"Swish!" Immediately after disintegrating the Direwolf phantom, several flying swords continued to charge forward, not weakening in the slightest. Howling through the air, they instantly struck against the body of that Polaris Golem. BANG! They slashed straight through it, and the black, rocky exterior of the Polaris Golem was instantly split open, revealing the fiery red body of the golem within.

"Ji Ning wins!" The distant, white-robe elder immediately called out in a high voice.

As for Bladask, his face instantly turned completely ashen.

Chapter 32: Shock and Awe (Part 2)

“Lost. I lost. How could...” Bloodrinker Bladask sat there atop the stone dais, his face ashen. He couldn’t believe what had just happened.

When Immortal cultivators engaged in a battle, life and death was separated by a hair. If they lost a single exchange, they could die.

“He used a golem. I also used a golem.” Bladask simply couldn’t accept this. “The two golems have identical elemental ki cores, and the same amount of elemental ki. It is an extremely fair situation; what we compete in is our comprehension of the Dao, our sword arts, and other skills. How could his sword arts actually be even more powerful than mine?”

How could he have known that Ning had actually reached the Dao Domain level long ago? The Dao Domain level was, normally speaking, the level which Primal Daoists were at. But of course, at the Black-White College, everyone was a supreme genius, and so there were many powerful Wanxiang Adepts who were at the Dao Domain level. Bladask, however, was still a hair away from being able to reach the Dao Domain level.

Through his swordplay, he could just barely touch the Dao Domain level. This was much like how, when Ning was young, when executing the [Raindrop Sword], he was able to unleash the power of being ‘one with the world’ with his sword attacks, even though he himself had not yet reached that level. This was one of the strengths of possessing powerful sword arts!

In terms of comprehension, Ning was at a higher level. In terms of sword arts, after having been doubly baptized by the Stellar Hall of the underwater estate and the Black-White Diagram, and after having meditated on the [Lesser Five Elements Sword], Ning’s sword arts had reached a limit.

In terms of soul, Ning was at the ‘divine sense’ level. Even amongst the Wanxiang Adepts of the Black-White College, only those reincarnated Immortals, so few they could be counted on one hand, were comparable to Ning.

In every single field, he was inferior. How could he not have lost?

“Senior apprentice-brother Bladask, I was lucky enough to win by one stroke.” Ning rose to his feet with a laugh, and the grand sealing formation around them disappeared. With a tap of his feet, Ning flew out of the arena, landing in the distance.

Bladask had an ugly look on his face. He flew out of the arena as well. He walked straight towards Ning, and with a wave of his hand, produced two jade bottles which he tossed to Ning. “A hundred black-white pellets and fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. Take it.”

Ning naturally stretched his hand out to accept them. “Hmph. Ji Ning.” Bladask stared at Ning, his eyes filled with a desire for battle. “No wonder Immortal Diancai accepted you as his disciple. I have nothing to say about my defeat. Next time, however...I will challenge you again.”

“I will wait for you.” Ning laughed. If someone wanted to deliver more black-white pellets and liquefied elemental essence to him, why would he refuse? “Hmph.” Bladask immediately walked towards Bu Ying. “Senior apprentice-brother Ying!”

The azure-robed man, Bu Ying, gave him a glance. “Don’t worry. Leave it to me.” This time, it was Ying who had set up and arranged for the new disciples to be taught a lesson, and he had also been the one to personally invite Bladask over. Clearly, now that Bladask had lost, no matter what, he, Bu Ying, couldn’t just let Ning leave victoriously.

Bu Ying’s gaze fell towards his fellow disciples nearby.

“Formidable.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth’s power truly cannot be underestimated.” This geniuses all had looks of caution in their eyes. From watching Ning’s attacks just now, they sensed that Ning’s power was definitely not lower than theirs. Without a certain degree of confidence, they naturally wouldn’t be willing to proceed.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Ying.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Ying, you are the only person who can

succeed.”

“Right, senior apprentice-brother Ying, you have also trained in the [Lesser Five Elements Sword], and the time you have spent training in it is longer. Your chances of winning are greater.” Everyone was saying this.

Bu Ying cursed to himself. So what if he trained in it for longer? Training in sword arts wasn't a matter of time; it was a matter of how much one understood regarding the Dao. An Immortal training in the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] for the first time would, in half a day, train to an extremely high level in it.

But Ying also knew...that since he was the instigator of this event, no matter what, he had to get involved. One had to be able to bear responsibility for one's actions.

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Ji Ning had immediately won with his attack; this had caused Mu Northson to be incomparably excited. “Well fought! Let those old disciples know that they can't just teach lessons to every new disciple as they please.”

Ning laughed. Winning was quite enjoyable. In addition, a hundred black-white pellets and fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence was his, just like that. Previously, when he had advanced from the early Zifu level to the peak Zifu level, he had used less than forty kilograms of it.

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth.” Bu Ying emerged from the group of old disciples. “Senior apprentice-brother Ying,” Ning responded.

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, your power truly is formidable. I didn't expect that shortly after joining our school, you would have already reached such a level in your understanding of the [Lesser Five Elements Sword]. I imagine that your insights into the Dao are at a very high level,” Bu Ying said..

Ning knew that his opponent wanted to gain some intelligence about him. He immediately laughed and said, “I just gained some initial insights into it, and have much to learn.” Bu Ying laughed loudly. “You are being

too modest, junior apprentice-brother. I, your senior apprentice-brother, also train in the [Lesser Five Elements Sword]. As I watched you execute your sword arts...I couldn't help but feel my hands itch. What say you and I spar for a bit?"

"Oh, this is what I wish for as well!" Ning immediately said. Someone was delivering more gifts to him? Why wouldn't he want it?

Based on Ning's calculations, especially given how strong his soul was, he felt that he should hold a major advantage over the other. There were probably not many Zifu Disciples who could match him, unless a reincarnated Immortal emerged to battle.

"What is the wager?" Ning asked. Bu Ying laughed. "Naturally, just a hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. Overly large wagers will hurt the camaraderie amongst us fellow disciples." Ning nodded. "Alright."

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Moments later. Ning and Bu Ying were each seated in the lotus position atop their stone pillars. "Begin," the white-haired elder barked. Instantly, the grand sealing formation once again appeared.

"The golem which I have chosen is known as the Six Harmonies Golem." Senior apprentice-brother Ying's voice rang out. "Be careful, junior apprentice-brother."

"Senior apprentice-brother. Please proceed." Ning's voice rang out as well.

The two sat on opposing stone pillars, staring at each other. The two golems below stared at each other as well.

"Kill!" Previously, Bu Ying had a smiling look on his face, but his face now turned solemn as he let out a low growl. Instantly, the Six Harmonies Golem simultaneously shot out thirty six flying swords, every single one of them covered with unique runes. The reason why this golem was named the Six Harmonies Golem was precisely because it was capable of executing this 'Six Harmonies Formation'.

Ning, seeing this, frowned. “Go!” Twelve flying swords emerged from the back of the Thousandwords Golem. These twelve flying swords hissed as they slashed through the air, transforming into a dense layer of rain, each containing inexhaustible amounts of power.

Rumble...

The thirty six flying swords swiveled as they flew, six of each forming into a formation base, with the six bases forming the Six Harmonies Formation. In addition, the entire formation transformed into a giant windmill.

“Rumble...” The power of it crushed downwards.

Crash crash crash....

The countless droplets of rain smashed viciously against that giant windmill, but the thirty six flying swords of the windmill swiveled about, easily dissipating the smashing power.

“Can’t block it. This Bu Ying truly is much more formidable than Bladask; fortunately, I was prepared long ago.” Ning’s face changed, and a fierce look flashed through his eyes. The twelve flying swords under his control suddenly separated into two parts. One part spun in a circle in midair, while the other formed a cross.

Whoosh! The twelve flying swords merged with each other, transforming into an azure, flaming sword. BOOM! The giant, azure flaming sword pierced directly through the windmill. The windmill was only able to take it for a brief moment before crumbling.

“[Duality Azureflame Sword]!” Bu Ying, seated there on the pillar, saw this. His face turned ashen, and then he let out a sigh. He didn’t even try to fight back, allowing Ning’s azure, flaming sword to pierce directly through the protective layer of his golem.

“Ji Ning wins!” The white-haired elder once more called out in a high voice.

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The Dao Debate Palace was a hubbub of noise right now. Bu Ying was definitely an outstanding figure amongst the Zifu Disciples of the Black-White College, and could be considered one of the movers and shakers. In terms of power, he was far superior to Bladask. And yet, even he had been defeated by this new disciple who had just joined the Black-White College?

“They are all supreme geniuses...but this Ji Ning is an absolute monster.” Ninelotus watched everything happen, and she murmured in her heart, “He reached the Dao Domain level at merely sixteen years of age? And his soul has supposedly reached the divine sense level...he’s absolutely a monster, like those reincarnated Immortals.”

“To lose to a monster like him...their defeats are nothing to be ashamed of.”

Chapter 33: Two Major Factions

With a thought, Ning removed his binding from the Thousandwords Golem, then leapt three hundred meters and landed outside the battle arena. He secretly sighed to himself, “Although I have reached the Dao Domain level, and my soul is at the ‘divine sense’ level...if I hadn’t meditated on the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] and increased the power of my sword arts, it would be hard to say if I would have won, or this Bu Ying would have won.”

His foundations were exceptionally stable, at the level of a reincarnated Immortal. However, prior to joining the Black-White College, his sword arts had been very weak; only after learning the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] had he been able to address this shortcoming.

If he hadn’t learned it, he would have had to rely on the power of his soul and controlled even more flying swords to achieve victory through numbers.

Swoosh! Bu Ying landed next to Ning as well. “Senior apprentice-brother Bu Ying,” Ning greeted him modestly.

Bu Ying sighed. “No wonder Immortal Diancai accepted you as his disciple, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth. I whole-heartedly acknowledge my loss. You were able to simultaneously control twelve flying swords and execute the ‘Drizzling Rain’ technique. Your level of insight is very high, and your soul is powerful; all of these things inspire admiration in me. In addition, junior apprentice-brother, you were even able to execute the [Duality Azureflame Sword]...I have nothing to say about my loss.”

“Here are a hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.” Bu Ying tossed two bottles to Ning, who accepted them. “However, junior apprentice-brother, you’ve now defeated both Bladask and myself.” Bu Ying looked towards Ning. “Make your preparations. This matter will not conclude here.” After speaking, Bu Ying began to walk towards the outside.

“It won’t conclude here?” Ning frowned, then followed him outside.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Northson excitedly ran over. It was as though he was even more excited than Ning by Ning’s victory. “That was too incredible. And to think those old disciples wanted to teach us new disciples a lesson. Hahaha! They’ve lost two rounds in a row now. This time, the old disciples really did lose face.”

Ning laughed. “It was nothing more than a spar.” Northson disagreed. “No, this was about face. This year, there are only two new disciples, you and me. Now that you’ve won, senior apprentice-brother, as your junior apprentice-brother, I’ve gained face as well.”

While chatting, the two moved to the outside. As for the old disciples, none of them, including Bu Ying, Winterain, and Bladask, moved to speak to Ning. The atmosphere was clearly rather awkward. The only person to move closer to him was Ninelotus.

“Senior apprentice-sister.” Ning felt his heart clench. Ninelotus truly was a naturally mesmerizing figure. In terms of appearance, she could be described as a peerless beauty; of all the beauties Ning had ever seen, she was second only to Meng Xin. But in terms of grace and aura, she was unquestionably number one.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Ninelotus’ voice was very soft and gentle. “You must be careful. You won two rounds in a row. The old disciples won’t just let things slide like this. No matter what, the traditions of our Black-White College will not be broken just for you. When you go back, you need to make your preparations.”

Ning’s pupils contracted slightly. He nodded. “I, Ji Ning, have always looked forward to the opportunity to spar with my fellow disciples.” Ninelotus nodded as well, then departed.

Ning glanced at the other old disciples. However, given that even Bu Ying had been defeated, none of the others felt any confidence in being able to win, and so they naturally didn’t say a word.

“Let’s go.” Ning immediately led Northson away, and the two left the

Dao Debate Palace. Swoosh! The two quickly disappeared into the night sky.

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They watched as Ning and Northson left. Only now did the old disciples within the Dao Debate Palace begin to speak amongst themselves.

“We actually lost two battles in a row!” A tall, skinny youth said in a hoarse voice, “We old disciples are meant to teach a lesson to the newer disciples, to let them understand the principle that there is a heaven beyond the heavens, and geniuses beyond geniuses. This is a tradition of our Black-White College that has lasted for countless years! All of us are old disciples who joined years ago. No matter what, we can’t just admit defeat like this!”

“Right. If we admit defeat, then that means that we old disciples are admitting inferiority to the newer disciples.” Even Winterain nodded as well. The old disciples all nodded. This was a tradition!

The old disciples were to teach the new disciples a lesson. These old disciples had joined many years ago, and although some of the weaker ones amongst them would occasionally lose to a new disciple, the stronger ones amongst the old disciples would gain a victory back in turn! If they weren’t able to do so...didn’t that mean that every single one of them was inferior to the new disciples?

“From ancient times to modern times, there has never been anyone capable of forcing the old disciples of the Black-White College to admit defeat. Not even reincarnated Immortals!” Bu Ying nodded solemnly as he spoke. “I will go ask junior apprentice-brother Qinghe.” After speaking, Bu Ying left the Dao Debate Palace.

“Let’s go!” The old disciples all departed from the Dao Debate Palace, transforming into streaks of light and disappearing into the sky.

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The disciples of the Black-White College were divided into three generations. The third generation consisted of Zifu Disciples and

Wanxiang Adepts. Amongst the Zifu Disciples...the most outstanding and dazzlingly strong one was Qinghe.

Qinghe entered the school at eighteen years of age, and had also reached the Dao Domain level. Given his current level of insight, he could easily reach the Wanxiang Adept level, but he needed to further solidify his foundation. Only with a sufficiently stable foundation would the Zifu Lake within his body truly expand to the limit, allowing his future potential to be greater.

Late night.

“Junior apprentice-brother Qinghe, junior apprentice-brother Qinghe.” Bu Ying charged into the skies above a towering mountain, then immediately began to shout, his voice echoing within the entire estate.

The Zifu Disciple retainers and the commoner servants in the estate below all began to react.

“Senior apprentice-brother Bu Ying, why have you come to speak to me so late at night?” A figure suddenly emerged from the courtyard, head upraised and staring towards Bu Ying, who stood there in the night sky. Bu Ying immediately landed within the courtyard.

“I’ve come here this late at night to inform you about something, junior apprentice-brother.” Bu Ying shook his head and sighed. “I’m ashamed to even say this. Each year, the new disciples of our Black-White College will go to the Dao Debate Palace and be taught a lesson by us old disciples. In the past, the two of us experienced this as well.”

Qinghe laughed and nodded. “Right. The old disciples have all been in the school for many years. Naturally, they will win.”

“Except, we lost.” Bu Ying shook his head. “Just now, several of us old disciples were at the Dao Debate Palace, sparring with the new disciples, Ji Ning and Mu Northson. We defeated Northson twice in a row...but afterwards, when we sparred with Ji Ning, we were defeated by him twice in a row. In fact, even I lost to the hands of junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.”

“What?!” Qinghe was shocked. “Senior apprentice-brother, you lost?”

“Right. That’s why I came to invite you,” Bu Ying said. “You can be said to be the Zifu Disciple amongst us who is at the very peak of power, and so...”

Qinghe nodded. “Senior apprentice-brother, don’t worry. Naturally, I won’t shirk my duties in this matter.”

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“Senior apprentice-sister, senior apprentice-sister.” Ninelotus stood there in midair, staring down towards a graceful estate below.

“Little sister, you came?” A clear, cold voice rang out. “Why don’t you come in?” Ninelotus immediately landed. There was a black-robed maiden standing there, beneath the moonlight. In front of her there was an exquisitely carved wine flask and wine goblets.

This maiden’s beautiful features were absolutely superior to that of even Ninelotus...and that cool, indifferent aura made her seem like a true Immortal of the heavens. And, in truth, this black-robed maiden was indeed a reincarnated Immortal. Within the Black-White College, she was an extremely famous reincarnated Immortal, the Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei! As one of the extremely few reincarnated Immortals, although she was currently only at the peak Wanxiang Adept level, her status was comparable to that of the Primal Daoists.

“Senior apprentice-sister.” Ninelotus sat down as well. “Are you aware that amongst the new disciples, there is one who is apparently a reincarnated Immortal as well?”

“Are you referring to junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning?” The black-robed maiden sat down, then nodded gently. “I heard that Immortal Diancai chose him as his disciple.”

Ninelotus immediately said, “Senior apprentice-sister, you don’t know this, but even before joining the school, Ji Ning has already reached the Dao Domain level, and his soul has supposedly even reached the ‘divine sense’ level.”

“His soul has supposedly reached the ‘divine sense’ level?” The black-robed maiden was rather surprised. Ninelotus nodded. “This is what my master told me.”

“Immortal Fivecraze?” The black-robed maiden nodded gently. “Intriguing. I didn’t expect that one of the new disciples would be such an impressive figure.”

Ninelotus continued, “And just now, at the Dao Debate Palace, this Ji Ning consecutively defeated two of the old disciples. I trust that once this information spreads out, the old disciples definitely won’t let this matter rest. No matter what, they will have to win it back.”

“Mm. Win. Yes, it will be necessary to win a match back.” The black-robed maiden nodded, then smiled. “But if he really is a reincarnated Immortal, given his current level of insight, he might even have some of his former memories from his past life. If you aren’t careful, his power might suddenly explosively increase. Defeating a reincarnated Immortal won’t be an easy matter.”

Ninelotus glanced at this senior apprentice-sister of hers, this Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei. Of course reincarnated Immortals were terrifyingly strong. All of them had astonishing levels of talent, and when they started to train, they increased in power at a shocking rate.

“This Ji Ning is only sixteen,” Ninelotus said. The black-robed maiden laughed. “If he hasn’t awakened any of his former memories, beating him shouldn’t be too hard. When are they going to go challenge him? I will go and take a look.”

“It should be tomorrow,” Ninelotus said. “Fine. I’ll definitely go.” Yu Wei nodded.

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Wanxiang Adept Northmont Blackcurrent frowned. “Ji Ning?”

“Right. Ji Ning. He consecutively defeated two of the old disciples. Even Bu Ying was beaten by him.” A black-robed youth sat there, chatting leisurely.

Blackcurrent laughed. "I didn't expect that the Ji Ning who Northmont Baiwei befriended is actually as powerful as this. I previously misjudged him. Since he is going to be challenged tomorrow, I'll go and take a look as well."

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"Ji Ning? I heard that in the Carefree Caverns, he unleashed a Rainwater Sword Domain. Clearly, he's already reached the Dao Domain level, yes?"

"What? Dao Domain level? No wonder he is this powerful."

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"The new disciple, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, defeated two of the old disciples? How can we accept this? No matter what, we have to win a match back."

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One told ten, and ten told a hundred.

There were only so many disciples in the Black-White College to begin with, and most of them had known each other for many years and were on quite good terms with each other. As they exchanged this news amongst each other...by the second day, this news had already spread throughout the entire Black-White College. In fact, even some of the well-connected major powers within Stillwater Commandery, such as the Northmont clan, had received word of it.

For now, the other disciples all felt that, no matter what, they had to win a match back.

The disciples of the entire Black-White College had naturally divided into two major factions. The first was the new disciples faction; this consisted of just Ji Ning and Northson. The second was the old disciples faction; that consisted of all of the other disciples.

"Senior apprentice-brother, did you just say that this disciple of mine consecutively defeated two of the old disciples?" The black-robed, black-haired Immortal Diancai had a hint of curiosity in his eyes.

“Right. Virtually all of the third-generation disciples are going to the Dao Debate Palace. They definitely want to win a match back..” The short elder, dressed in ragged beggar’s clothes, said with excitement, “Hahaha, it’s been a long time since something so amusing has happened within our Black-White College. Myself, an ole madman, just survived the ninth-century tribulation, and now I’ve encountered this. Intriguing, intriguing. When the time comes, I’ll definitely go watch. Are you going?”

Immortal Diancai nodded gently, then laughed, “Since you are going, senior apprentice-brother, as your junior apprentice-brother, I’ll naturally accompany you.”

“Hahahaha. Great, great, great. Intriguing, intriguing.” The short elder, Immortal Fivecraze, suddenly waved his hand. “Now hurry up and bring out that Centiflower Immortal Wine and let your senior apprentice-brother have a taste.”

“Centiflower Immortal Wine? But I got that in one of the minor worlds...” Immortal Diancai’s face turned ashen.

The short elder stared at him. “I, your senior apprentice-brother, probably will only be able to live another nine centuries. And you can’t even spare me some wine? If you refuse to give me any wine to drink, then when Ji Ning competes against the old disciples, I’ll play some underhanded tricks in secret!”

Immortal Diancai let out a long, helpless sigh. “Fine, I’ll give it to you!”

Chapter 34: Fated to be Master and Servant

“Whew.” Watching the sun rise in the east, Ning let out a soft breath. “Come, all of you, come. I’ll take on all comers!”

He had won two consecutive battles last night. The parting words of senior apprentice-brother Bu Ying and senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus allowed Ning to understand...that no matter what, the old disciples definitely wouldn’t just let things rest. They would have to win one round of battle, no matter the cost. Ning had to admit; some of the supremely talented disciples of the Black-White College would definitely find it hard to admit inferiority.

However, Ning wouldn’t easily admit defeat either. If he had to lose, he had to be thoroughly convinced of his defeat.

“If you want to defeat me, then you need to make me feel completely convinced of your superior power.” Ning’s eyes were filled with a readiness for battle. This entire night, he had been analyzing the [Lesser Five Elements Sword]; since he knew that he had to engage in battles tomorrow, he naturally had to seize every moment.

Whoosh.

Ning willed it, and a flying boat appeared next to him. He prepared to go meet with his master, Immortal Diancai...after all, there were many questions he had encountered when analyzing the [Lesser Five Elements Sword]. Perhaps by asking his master, he would have some of his questions resolved.

Swoosh! The flying boat instantly disappeared into the skies. But suddenly, a voice rang out. “Senior apprentice-brother Darknorth!”

Ning, atop the boat, turned to look. A middle-aged man, mounted on a sword, was flying towards him. A hint of nervousness and awe was on his face, and the borders of his sleeves were decorated with white and black embroidery. Upon seeing the embroidery, Ning immediately understood

that this should be a formal disciple's retainer.

Every single formal disciple was able to take on ten retainers. These Immortal practitioner retainers would carry out some some important tasks, deliver messages, stand as guards, etc. These were the tasks they would carry out.

"What is it?" Ning looked towards him. The middle-aged man replied respectfully, "There is someone outside the College who wishes to see you, senior apprentice-brother Darknorth. He calls himself Northmont Baiwei."

"Northmont Baiwei?" Ning nodded. "I'll head right over." Swoosh! He immediately directed the boat towards the Black-White College's main gate. Moments later, he arrived and saw that outside the gate, Baiwei was seated atop his Ninestar Immortal Carriage in an extremely ostentatious manner, with the driver still that female servant construct.

"Ji Ning." Baiwei, upon seeing Ning fly over aboard his boat, immediately disembarked from the carriage. "Baiwei." Ning landed. "Why have you come so early this morning to the College?"

Baiwei laughed, then pointed towards three people standing nearby. All of them had fairly exceptional auras. "I told you before that I wanted five slots from you. These three will fill up three of the slots. As for the other two...they'll arrive after a period of time."

"The three of them?" Ning sized them up carefully. Every single formal disciple could only have ten retainers. Once a master-servant relationship was established, they would generally be together for a century, or even centuries.

"These three are all not bad." Baiwei pointed to the tallest one, a rather skinny youth. "His name is Cloudship. He's a member of the Cloud tribe, and an early stage Zifu Disciple."

Cloudship's eyes were very bright. He immediately said with respect, "Cloudship pays his respects to senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning."

"This is Cloudship's little sister." Baiwei pointed to a devilishly beautiful, tall, willowy woman who was dressed in white muslin. This woman's eyes

were extremely large, soft, and moist. Her eyes were just as bright as her older brother's. She gave Ning a deep look, then curtsied and said, "Cloudjade pays her respects to senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning."

Baiwei then pointed to the final person, a seemingly ordinary youth. "His name is Forgard. He was originally one of my guards, and is extremely loyal."

"Forgard pays his respects to senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." The ordinary-looking youth also bowed with respect.

"Cloudship, Cloudjade, and Forgard." Baiwei laughed. "They will be your retainers, Brother Ji Ning. If they treat you with any disrespect at all, you can immediately expel them from the Black-White College. As for myself, Northmont Baiwei, I'll never meet them again after that. In dealing with them, you do not need to consider the question of giving me face at all." Ning nodded.

"Here are another hundred ordinary mortals. They were all carefully selected, and all have some special talents. They are skilled in calligraphy, painting, cooking, and the likes." Baiwei pointed towards a group of ordinary mortals. These were almost all women, with only two or three dozen being men.

When Baiwei pointed towards them, they all fell to their knees in respect, not daring to show the slightest hint of discourtesy.

"Sorry for the trouble, Brother Baiwei." Ning nodded. Baiwei asked, "If you aren't in a hurry, how about, in a few days, you, me, and that Mu Northson have a little get together?"

"Very well." Ning hurriedly added, "Right. There's something I need to trouble you about, Brother Baiwei." "Oh? Pray tell," Baiwei said.

Ning nodded. "Here's the situation. When travelling to Stillwater City, I encountered three early stage Zifu Disciples of the Meng clan. Their names were Meng Xin, Meng Roch, and Meng Jun. Afterwards, they met with one of their seniors of their clan, someone they addressed as 'Uncle Ming', a balding, middle-aged man."

“Of the three of them, Meng Roch once used a forbidden technique and harmed his foundations. I imagine that it will be hard for him to enter a school, and so I want to give one of the retainer positions to him. Only, I have no idea where he is living, so I’d like to ask you to help investigate, Brother Baiwei.”

“This is a minor matter,” Baiwei said with confidence. “The Meng clan is a major clan. The Heavenly Treasures Mountain will definitely be keeping track of the movements of the members of their clan. I’ll go investigate and will immediately find out.”

“Alright, if there’s nothing else, I won’t tarry.” Baiwei once more walked to his Ninestar Immortal Carriage. The two clasped hands towards each other, bidding each other farewell, and then the Immortal Carriage transformed into a blaze of light, disappearing into the horizons.

With but a thought, Ning made his flying boat increase in size, to a ship that was many tens of meters in length. “All of you, come aboard.” The three retainers and the many mortal followers all boarded the ship, and then the ship soared into the skies, flying at high speed towards Darknorth Peak.

.....

Baiwei, riding within the Ninestar Immortal Carriage, quickly arrived at the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.

“I heard that the new disciple of the Black-White College, Ji Ning, defeated two of the old disciples in a row last night!”

“What sort of a person is this Ji Ning? He is that amazing?”

“No idea. All I heard is that he was accepted by Immortal Diancai as his apprentice.”

As soon as he left the carriage, Baiwei overheard two Immortal practitioners engaged in a conversation. The Heavenly Treasures Mountain was a place where fish and dragons intermingled; there was quite the free flow of information here.

“Oh?” A hint of a smile appeared on Baiwei’s face. “My brother Ji Ning

actually did something so incredible last night, and I didn't even know about it? Mm. First, I'll help him locate that Meng Roch fellow. Since my brother Ji Ning remembered him, I imagine that this Roch must have some extraordinary qualities."

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East Stillwater City. Within an exquisite estate. Meng Roch was seated here, drinking wine.

"Little Sister Xin, let me."

"Little Sister Xin, I'll help you package these."

Meng Jun was quite the busy bee right now, helping Meng Xin take care of and package some of her household items. They had been living in their Third Uncle's residence in recent days, but since they had entered a school, the school had given them three days time to prepare. Then, they would leave Stillwater City and head to the headquarters of the main sect, located a million kilometers away from Stillwater City.

Meng Jun glanced sideways at Meng Roch, who was drinking wine gloomily, then sighed, "Rocky, just endure it for a bit. In a few more years, when your injuries can no longer be detected, you'll be able to join a school as well. I must say though, it seems as though karma has bound myself and Little Sister Xin together. We actually ended up in the same school by coincidence. Haha, what luck."

Still drinking wine, Roch's face sank, and he crushed the beastskull goblet in his hand to dust.

"Hmph." Jun let out a snort, then turned his head and left.

"Despicable fellow." Roch gave him a glance.

Actually, he was able to guess that Jun had been following after Xin...and so, when Xin had entered a school, Jun had chosen that same school. Xin and Jun were equally talented, and so it wasn't strange for them to both join the same school.

Roch had been infatuated with Xin since he was young, but the same

was true for Jun! This made Roch feel all the more miserable.

“Despicable fellow!” Roch ground his teeth. “I hate the fact that I...”

“Big Brother Rocky.” Xin stood there next to him. Roch raised his head, looking towards her. “Don’t give up. I believe that you will definitely succeed.” Xin’s eyes were slightly red. Roch instantly felt a warm feeling in his heart, and he nodded strongly.

“Succeed? Hmph.” From nearby, a strange, bizarre sounding snort could be heard. “Little Sister Xin, let’s go. We should go to our Thousand Rivers School.” Xin gave Roch a deep look, but in the end, she had to leave. She had to go to the main sect. Had to embark on her Immortal path.

Roch silently watched as she left.

“Little Xin. Wait for me,” Roch silently said to himself. However, the fact that he had been kicked out by various schools for three days in a row made Roch feel all the more miserable and frantic in his heart.

.....

Within the Black-White College. Ning was carefully observing Cloudship, Cloudjade, and Forgard. Although Baiwei had brought them here, if Ning truly disliked them, he could still kick them out. After all, masters and retainers would be together for a very long period of time. As for Cloudship, Cloudjade, and Forgard, they were rather nervous as well.

“This Forgard was originally a guard? And is quite loyal?” Ning had immediately felt well-disposed towards Forgard. “Cloudship, upon seeing me, immediately smiled; he knows how to flatter. As for his little sister, Cloudjade...what the hell was Baiwei thinking? Why’d he deliver such an alluring girl to me?”

Cloudjade definitely could be considered an alluring girl. In terms of appearance alone, she was not even inferior to Meng Xin, and more attractive than even Ninelotus. In addition, her entire body seemed to naturally exude a certain magnetism, and her soft, moist eyes were extremely seductive as well. It seemed as though ever since she had seen Ning, she was either consciously or unconsciously attempting to seduce

him.

“Forgard. Why do you have a name like this?” Ning asked.

Forgard said solemnly, “Originally, I had no name. Afterwards, I was given a name by the young master and served him for many years. Perhaps the young master felt that I would have great future accomplishments, and so he gave me this life-changing chance. And thus, he also gave me a Daoist title, ‘Forgard’; he wished for me to forget that I was once a guard, and wished for me to truly become a formidable Immortal practitioner.

Ning nodded.

Whoosh. The ship descended towards Darknorth Peak. The nearby Cloudship, Cloudjade, and Forgard all nervously awaited Ning’s questions...but unexpectedly, Ning didn’t ask them a single thing.

“Uncle White.” Upon landing, Ning spoke out, and the Whitewater Hound immediately appeared. Ning glanced towards the three retainers and many commoners, then said in a clear voice, “All of you, listen up. This is Darknorth Peak, of the Black-White College. Here in my Darknorth Peak...you must always obey the words of my Uncle White. Whatever Uncle White tells you to do, you do. You must never disobey.”

“Yes.” Cloudship, Cloudjade, Forgard, and the crowd of commoners all assented respectfully.

“Uncle White, those three are retainers, while the rest are all ordinary mortals.” Ning looked towards the Whitewater Hound. “I’ll hand full responsibility for all matters in Darknorth Peak to you, Uncle White. Give them their instructions and tell them about the rules here at the Black-White College.”

The Whitewater Hound immediately transformed into mist, and when he reformed, he appeared as a white-robed, white-haired man.

The white-robed, white-haired man had a very gentle look in his eyes, and he seemed to extrude a natural aura of friendliness, as though he brought the gentle, warm spring wind with him. He laughed and said,

“Ning, son, go ahead and leave these things to me.”

“Alright.” Ning immediately transformed into a ray of light, quickly departing from Darknorth Peak. As for the others, including the retainers, they were restricted as to where in the Black-White College they could go.

A short while later, Ning arrived before the mountain peak which was the residence of his master, Immortal Diancai.

“Ji Ning. Enter.” A calm voice rang out by Ning’s ears. “Yes, Master.” Ning immediately descended towards the peak.

Chapter 35: Immortal Diancai's Guidance

There was no one within the hall, only the black-haired, black-robed Immortal Diancai. The Immortal was seated in the lotus position atop his jade bed. Ning stepped into the room, then immediately bowed with respect. "Master."

Immortal Diancai nodded slightly. He looked at Ning, a hint of amusement visible on his face. "Ji Ning, I heard that yesterday, you defeated two of your senior apprentice-brothers?"

"Yes," Ning said. "Only, I'm afraid my fellow disciples won't let the matter rest. Today, they will probably come challenge me again. Thus, I have come to you, Master, in the hope that you can provide me with some guidance."

"Mm. At least you are grounded. You didn't grow arrogant just because you defeated two Zifu Disciples." Immortal Diancai nodded. "Everyone who has been accepted to the Black-White College is a supreme genius. The third generation is primarily divided into Zifu Disciples and Wanxiang Adepts." Ning listened carefully.

"My Black-White College has more than a hundred Zifu Disciples, and more than two hundred Wanxiang Adepts. Why?" Immortal Diancai continued, "These disciples are all at fairly high levels of comprehension; if they wanted to enter the Wanxiang Adept level, I imagine that all of them would be able to do so. The reason why there are still a hundred-plus Zifu Disciples is for several reasons; first of all, they want to solidify their bases of power and prepare an 'Immortal foundation'. The second is because they wish to increase their level of insight and comprehension; that way, when they encounter the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, they will naturally have a greater chance of surviving them."

Ning nodded. Three Calamities, Nine Tribulations...as an Immortal practitioner, Ning naturally knew of them. The power of these trials was something that was related to time; the more time passed, the more powerful they would become. In addition, they were also related to one's

karmic merits or sins. The greater the sin, the more difficult the tribulation. Finally, they were also related to one's level of power. If they had trained for the same period of time, the tribulation for a Primal Daoist would be more dangerous than the tribulation for a Wanxiang Adept....

But of course, there were many other variables. It was difficult to predict the power of the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, and in the end, it was the guillotine held over the necks of all Immortal practitioners.

However, there was one commonality: Strengthen one's level of comprehension! Strengthen one's soul! Strengthen one's Dao-heart! The more stable one's foundation was, the greater one's chances at overcoming the tribulations would be.

"It is precisely because they wish to prepare for the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, and because they wish to establish a foundation to become a Celestial Immortal, that none of them are in a hurry to make their breakthrough," Immortal Diancai explained. "Generally speaking, new disciples will remain at the Zifu stage for ten or so years. But of course, those who are slightly weaker in terms of comprehension might stay at that level for fifty or sixty years. As for the extremely talented ones, they'll stay at that level for half a year before making their breakthrough."

"This is why the Wanxiang Disciples represent the true elites of the third generation." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. Ning nodded. He understood.

"The Wanxiang Adepts of our Black-White College are different from the Wanxiang Adepts of other schools. They are true geniuses amongst Wanxiang Adepts!" Immortal Diancai said. "For other schools, every so often, they might have one or two Wanxiang Adepts who reach the 'Dao Domain' level...but for our Black-White College, almost every single Wanxiang Adept is at the Dao Domain level."

Hearing this, Ning felt shock in his heart.

"There are some who are even more formidable. They have an incredibly deep comprehension of their chosen Dao, and perhaps even many insights into other Daos as well. They are able to reach the 'Dao Domain' level in

multiple, different Daos!”

“There are some who are even more monstrous. While at the Wanxiang Adept level, they have completely understand an entire ‘Dao Path’.”

Hearing this, Ning’s face instantly changed. A complete Dao Path?

“In other schools, generally speaking, only Immortals will comprehend an entire, complete Dao Path. But in our Black-White College, every single Primal Daoist has comprehended an entire Dao Path, and amongst the Wanxiang Adepts, a few of the most talented, most monstrous of the Adepts have comprehended an entire Dao Path as well.”

“However, Ji Ning, you have no need to feel embarrassed. These geniuses who were able to comprehend an entire Dao Path? Two of them are reincarnated Immortals, while the other three have been training for more than two hundred years. They might break through to the Primal Daoist level at any moment.”

“If you stay at the Black-White College for a bit longer, you’ll understand a few things. One of them is this; our Black-White College has an unspoken rule that only after one has comprehended a complete Dao Path will one make a breakthrough to the Primal Daoist level.” Immortal Diancai looked towards Ji Ning.

Wanxiang Adepts were the true elites amongst the crowd. For example, Ning himself; once his Zifu Lake expanded to the limit, he probably wouldn’t hesitate at all and break through to the Wanxiang Adept level. Thus, those who remained behind at the Zifu Disciple level were, generally speaking, the average-to-below-average bunch amongst these supreme geniuses.

“Wanxiang Adepts can be divided into three levels. The first level has only reached the Dao Domain level. The second has reached the Dao Domain level in multiple Daos. The third level has comprehended a complete Dao Path.”

Immortal Diancai looked towards Ji Ning. “Don’t worry. This time, your fellow disciples amongst the Wanxiang Adepts level won’t interfere too casually; they’ll first have the most powerful Zifu Disciples make their

attempt. But if even they are unable to defeat you, only then will the Wanxiang Adepts make their moves! No matter what, however, those supreme few who have comprehended a complete Dao Path will not interfere. If they did, that would be going a bit far.”

Ning nodded. “Master, how many reincarnated Immortals are there amongst the Wanxiang Adepts?” Ning was curious.

Immortal Diancai laughed. “You disciples are always curious about the reincarnated Immortals. Actually, it’s even possible that you yourself might be a reincarnated Immortal. Amongst the Wanxiang Adepts, there are three who have been verified to be reincarnated Immortals. Two of them spent eighty years in training and have comprehended a complete Dao Path, while the other one has trained for twenty or so years.”

“After having heard me say so many things, you should now understand the situation.” Immortal Diancai sighed. “You’ve only defeated two of the Zifu Disciples, and they aren’t even two of the strongest Zifu Disciples, much less the Wanxiang Adepts.”

“Your student understands,” Ning nodded. Immortal Diancai concluded, “Alright. Time to display your sword arts to me. Show me everything without holding back anything; you won’t be able to damage this hall.”

“Alright.” Ning didn’t hesitate at all. He immediately executed his most powerful sword attack...the [Tripartite Lotus Sword]. The Darknorth Sword in his hand shot out, and as it did, it divided into three colors. Lotus flowers began to bloom with incomparable beauty, but within the beauty, there was a sword light with astonishing power.

“The [Tripartite Lotus Sword]?” Immortal Diancai laughed. “The [Lesser Five Elements Sword]. I, your master, have also studied the [Lesser Five Elements Sword]. This sword attack you just displayed can be considered to have a tenth of its grace and charm.”

“A tenth?” Ning blinked. “Just a tenth?”

Immortal Diancai shook his head. “What do you expect? The [Tripartite Lotus Sword] focuses on it being ‘Tripartite’; it requires balance! Your comprehension into these three Daos, however, clearly shows that your

understanding of the Dao of Rainwater is much stronger, while the other two are much weaker.”

Ning was speechless.

“You’ve only developed your Rainwater Sword Domain. If you were to develop two other Dao Domains, then at that point in time, you would be able to display the true [Tripartite Lotus Sword],” Immortal Diancai said.

Ning nodded in acknowledgement. He had to admit, it was true that the [Tripartite Lotus Sword] required balance. His comprehension into the various Daos, however, was unbalanced.

“Your comprehension of the Dao of Rainwater is stronger,” Immortal Diancai said. “Since that’s the case, then I’ll help you retrofit your [Tripartite Lotus Sword] into a [Neo-Tripartite Lotus Sword].”

Immortal Diancai immediately waved out a sword-finger. Slash! A sword light instantly flashed, and wherever it passed, flowers began to bloom. Only, the green color within the flowerbuds was noticeably stronger, while the other two colors served to accentuate it.

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Four hours later, Immortal Diancai’s guidance came to an end.

“I’ve already explained as much as I can regarding the mysteries and secrets of the [Neo-Tripartite Lotus Sword] and the [Three-Foot Sword]’s first stance,” Immortal Diancai said. “Given your current level of understanding, you should completely focus your attention on analyzing these two sword arts. When the day comes where you are able to release the power of both sword arts, come find me again.”

“Yes.” Ning bowed with gratitude. The saying was true; listening to a master say a few words was superior to training by one’s self for a year.

The [Neo-Tripartite Lotus Sword] was something which he had already begun to vaguely grasp; most likely, he would soon be able to unleash its power. As for unleashing the true power of the original [Tripartite Lotus Sword], he would have to wait until he comprehended three Dao Domains. When the three became one, he would be able to unleash the most power

possible from the [Tripartite Lotus Sword]. What he was able to unleash right now was nothing more than some scraps.

As for the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], that was simply unfathomably profound. The [Three-Foot Sword] focused more on the heart; training in the sword was also training in the heart.

Swoosh!

Ning immediately boarded his flying boat and departed from his master's residence.

The Golden Crow hung high in the sky. The Dao Debate Palace, atop the Dao Debate Peak. Today, this place was incomparably lively. One streak of light after another flew towards here, riding on flying swords, flying boats, flying chains, flying gourds, flying red banners, flying leaves, and all sorts of curious magic treasures. One after another, they flew into the Dao Debate Palace.

“Senior apprentice-brother Icezen, weren't you wandering outside?”

“I just so happened to be over at the Raindragon Guards' place, and I heard that one of our new disciples, Ji Ning, defeated two of his Zifu Disciple colleagues in sequence. I'm quite curious, so I came over to take a look.”

“Quite a few fellow disciples have come today. It has been a long time since our Black-White College has been so lively.”

The two figures chatted amongst themselves as they flew to the Dao Debate Palace.

The battle arena was at the heart of the Dao Debate Palace. At the sides of the arena were many chairs. The higher-ranking disciples of the College sat down, while the Zifu Disciples remained standing to the side, chatting amongst themselves and in no rush to sit. After all, who knew how many fellow disciples would come today?

“Senior apprentice-brother Northmont Blackcurrent came as well.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Gatherform came as well.”

One Wanxiang Adept after another arrived, all quite well-known. One high-ranking leader after another arrived; naturally, these junior fellow disciples all had blazing looks in their eyes. As latecomers, they naturally had limited experience in adventuring in the outside world. But these fellow disciples who had joined more than a century ago already had shocking stories and legends about them that circulated in the outside world. It was actually quite a frequent occurrence for the Wanxiang Adepts of the Black-White College to be able to battle at a higher level and combat even Primal Daoists.

“It’s senior apprentice-brother Holyfire.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire!”

“Even senior apprentice-brother Holyfire came as well.”

The entire Dao Debate Palace was now filled with disciples. All of them, Zifu Disciples or Wanxiang Adepts, turned to look. A bald, barefoot, handsome youth who was dressed in fiery red robes came walking in. His forehead had a svastika symbol in the middle, and wherever he passed, it was as though a sea of flame moved with him, as the temperature of the surrounding area instantly skyrocketed.

Holyfire!

He was an absolute leader amongst the third generation disciples of the Black-White College. Although he wasn’t a reincarnated Immortal, he had still comprehended an entire, complete Dao Path. He could become a Primal Daoist of the College at any moment.

“Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire.” Blackcurrent was the first to draw close to him.. “Blackcurrent.” Holyfire glanced at Blackcurrent, then said calmly, “Has the new disciple, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, arrived yet?”

“Not yet. There was a junior apprentice-brother who went quite some time ago to junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning’s Darknorth Peak, but he hasn’t come yet,” Blackcurrent explained.

Holyfire nodded, then strode forward, taking a seat atop one of the

centermost stone seats. The fellow disciples seated around Holyfire were all formidable figures within the College. For the likes of the Zifu Disciples, they could only stare at him from afar; after all, they didn't have a relationship with him.

Chapter 36: Junior Apprentice-Brother Ji Ning Welcomes All Challengers

The winter wind was quite refreshing. Ji Ning stood atop his boat, soaring through the skies, and in his mind, he continued to think back to the scenes of his master, Immortal Diancai, displaying sword arts for him to see.

“Master’s sword arts have truly reached an inconceivable level,” Ning sighed to himself. Diancai has often referred to as the ‘second coming of Immortal Northwalker’, and also as the disciple of the Black-White College with the greatest chances of becoming a Celestial Immortal. Immortal Diancai’s sword arts vastly surpassed the level which Ning was able to comprehend.

“Hm? Someone’s here?” As his flying boat reached the air above Darknorth Peak, Ning saw that there were currently two people standing outside the gates to his estate. It was a white-robed Mu Northson and Winterain, dressed in white cotton clothes.

Swoosh. Ning landed on the ground. “Master.” The ordinary mortals standing at the gate immediately saluted.

“Junior apprentice-brother Northson, senior apprentice-sister Winterain, why are you here?” After landing, Ning smiled towards them. Only now did Winterain let out a long sigh of relief. “Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, can it be that you don’t know about today’s matters?”

Of course Ning knew. “Senior apprentice-sister Winterain, are you referring to the challenges at the Dao Debate Palace?”

“Of course.” Winterain nodded. “Today, many of our fellow disciples have hurried over there. Even some of our fellow disciples who were not present in the college, upon hearing this news, have hurried back. I’ve come to invite you to the Dao Debate Palace, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth.”

Ning nodded. Winterain continued, “Let’s hurry. I imagine many of our

fellow disciples are growing impatient.”

“Alright.” Ning looked towards the nearby Northson. “Junior apprentice-brother Northson, why didn’t you go to the Dao Debate Palace, and instead came to find me?”

“Need you ask?” Northson stared. “The entire Black-White College only has two new disciples; you and me. The two of us are on one side. All those people at the Dao Debate Palace are older, more senior disciples. If I go there, what am I supposed to do? Just stand there like an idiot and be stared at by everyone?”

Ning laughed. “Let’s go.” There was no way to back off now. If he backed off, he would be looked down upon by everyone. He might as well openly go welcome the challenges.

Whoosh. The three rode atop their respective magic treasures or construct, quickly disappearing into the skies as three rays of light which sped towards the Dao Debate Palace.

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It was rare for so many fellow disciples to be gathered here at the Dao Debate Palace. Every single one of the disciples present today could be described as truly heroic figures.

“Why hasn’t that junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning arrived yet?”

“That young junior apprentice-brother, Ji Ning...he wouldn’t be afraid, would he?”

The fellow disciples were all chatting in small groups amongst themselves as they waited. It was, however, almost noon. Some of those who had come earlier had been waiting for nearly four hours. Naturally, they were growing rather impatient.

Suddenly...three figures flew towards them from afar, then landed at the gates to the Dao Debate Palace. This instantly attracted the attention of many of their fellow disciples.

“He’s here.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning came.”

“That’s junior apprentice-brothers Ji Ning and Northson. Next to them is junior apprentice-sister Winterain.” Ji Ning and Northson had appeared at the grand ceremony of initiation, after all; most of the people were still able to recognize them with one glance.

Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, seated in the center, glanced at them then said softly, “That fur-clad one is Ji Ning?” Northmont Blackcurrent, seated next to him, immediately said hurriedly, “Right, he is Ji Ning.”

“Just from the look in his eyes, I can tell that his Dao-heart is very resolute,” Holyfire said softly. Blackcurrent replied, “If junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning knew that you were praising him like this, senior apprentice-brother, I imagine he would be endlessly overjoyed.”

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After entering the Dao Debate Palace, Ning went directly to the side room where he had previously activated the Thousandwords golem, and then brought the golem to return to the hall.. He stood there, in the hall, sweeping everyone with his gaze.

There were familiar figures, such as Ninelotus and the others. There were several figures he didn’t recognize, but who the other fellow disciples surrounded; clearly, these were extremely high-ranking figures of the College, such as that bald, fiery-robed youth, that black-robed maiden, or that sloppy-looking fat youth, or that large, muscular youth whose entire body gleamed with magic treasures but whose skin was jade-white...

“Those people being surrounded by others are probably the most supreme members of the third generation. They have probably either comprehended an entire Dao Path or are reincarnated Immortals,” Ning mused to himself.

Swoosh. Ning leapt forward like a streak of light, moving three hundred meters and landing on a distant stone pillar. Staring at his surroundings, he said in a clear voice, “My senior fellow disciples.”

Instantly, the entire Dao Debate Palace grew silent.

“Yesterday, I was lucky enough to defeat two senior apprentice-brothers,” Ning said in a high voice. “Thus, today I have come again. Any of my senior fellow disciples who wishes to discuss the Dao with me can come up and do so. As for the wager...I’ve recently joined the school, and can’t afford too large a wager, and so we’ll just go with the smallest wager of a hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. I will wait here. Anyone who wishes to discourse on the Dao with me can come up.”

His words concluded. The entire Dao Debate Palace remained quiet for a moment of time.

That seemingly sloppy-looking, pudgy youth who was surrounded by many others laughed, his face covered with delight, as he looked towards Ji Ning, who stood there in the distance atop the stone pillar. “This junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning really is straightforward and passionate. I like him.”

This sloppy-looking, pudgy youth...was, awe-inspiringly enough, the undisputed number one figure of the third generation of Black-White College disciples. In the outside world, he was often referred to as the ‘Sloppy Daoist’, but his actual Daoist title was ‘Threefat’. Although he was not a reincarnated Immortal, Daoist Threefat was able to suppress the two reincarnated Immortals in might, and so became known as the number one figure amongst the third generation. One truly couldn’t judge by looks alone.

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“Hear that? Even little Sloppy likes this Ji Ning.” In a corner of the Dao Debate Palace, the similarly sloppy-looking short elder chortled. Next to him, the black-haired, black-robed Immortal Diancai said resignedly, “Senior apprentice-brother Fivecraze, why did we have to come here to the Dao Debate Palace? We could’ve stayed in our own estate and used a water-scrying technique; wouldn’t we still be able to see everything going on here? Our apprentice-nephews such as the headmaster are definitely all watching this in their own estates through a water-scrying technique.”

The short elder glanced sideways at Immortal Diancai. “When we watch here, we can also hear the conversations going on between the third generation disciples. That’s so much more fun. As for little Sloppy, he really is the disciple I love the most; even his thoughts are identical to mine. Don’t worry; we’ll watch here secretly, and those third generation disciples won’t notice a thing.”

“Alas.” Immortal Diancai shook his head helplessly. This old fellow really was getting crazier and crazier.

Birds of a feather flock together; ‘Sloppy’ had even given himself the Daoist title ‘Threefat’, and was incredibly sloppily dressed. Immortal Diancai was an extremely strict person; naturally, he disliked this tremendously. But there was nothing he could do... ‘Old Crazy’ was the oldest of the Loose Immortals of the Black-White College, while ‘Young Crazy’ was the most talented disciple the Black-White College had to offer.

“I hope that I can live to witness little Sloppy become an Earth Immortal. If I can witness him become a Celestial Immortal, I’ll die with no regrets.” The short elder suddenly turned somber and serious.

“Senior apprentice-brother?” Immortal Diancai was startled. The short elder stared at the fat, sloppy-looking youth who was surrounded by many other disciples. “Just you wait and see. Little Sloppy will definitely be more powerful than me.”

Immortal Diancai’s gaze fell towards the distant stone pillar, and towards Ji Ning who was seated atop it. This was the only disciple under his tutelage.

“It’s about to begin.” The short elder’s eyes lit up. “It’s the fellow called Qinghe.”

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There were very many third generation disciples gathered here at the Dao Debate Palace. The first to stand out was Qinghe, the man who was publicly acknowledged as the strongest of the Zifu Disciple students.

Swoosh. An azure-robed figure moved forward like a blur, flying directly towards the distant stone pillar before coming to a halt atop it. The golem he controlled moved with him, landing on the arena below.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” The azure-robed figure stared at the distant Ning. “My name is Qinghe. I joined a few years before you did, and would like to discuss the Dao with you.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded.

“Begin.” The white-haired elder let out a loud shout, and the grand sealing formation instantly covered the entire arena. Ning sat down calmly in the lotus position, and senior apprentice-brother Qinghe did the same.

“Be careful, junior apprentice-brother. I am going to use a secret art which I discovered when adventuring in the outside world; it is an art which a dying senior left behind, which allows for the control of many flying needles. This isn’t a technique which our school has records about,” Qinghe said.

“Senior apprentice-brother, feel free to use it,” Ning replied clearly. The territory controlled by the Grand Xia Dynasty was too vast. Over the course of countless years, there were quite a few legacies left behind by Fiendgods or various major powers. As for legacies left behind by senior Immortal cultivators...those were countless beyond counting. Only, these relic sites also involved tremendous levels of danger. Without having enough ability, one could not rashly enter them.

“Watch carefully.” Qinghe appeared quite relaxed, but suddenly, his gaze sharpened.

Swish swish swish swish swish. Countless flying needles suddenly flew out of the body of the golem below him. Those countless jade-green flying needles spun in midair, resonating with each other and actually forming an enormous green scorpion. This giant jade-green scorpion’s eyes were flashing with a ferocious intent.

For some reason, this caused Ning to feel alarmed. “Not easy to deal with.” He had been planning to once more use his [Duality Azureflame Sword], but he instantly decided to use his current most powerful

technique; the [Neo-Tripartite Lotus Sword].

What he didn't know was that Qinghe, as the publicly acknowledged number one expert of the Zifu Disciples, had a level of insight into the Dao that was comparable to that of most Wanxiang Adepts already. He, too, had reached the Dao Domain level. In terms of insight, he definitely was not inferior to Ning. In addition, he had spent many years analyzing this 'Scorpic Godneedles' technique. Given his power, if Ning didn't fight back at full strength, he would probably be crushed instantly.

"Swoosh."

Three swords suddenly lit up. One transformed into a watery light, the second into a fiery glow, and the third into an azure aura. The three flying swords formed into a tripartite formation, and as they flew forward, suddenly transformed into an enormous lotus flower, which had an incomparably sharp and fierce sword light within the blossom.

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"He wins." The short elder in the corner of the Dao Debate Palace sighed. "This sword art was born from the [Tripartite Lotus Sword], but is more heavily focused towards the water-element of the Five Elements. However, this power really is quite something! Ji Ning just entered the College, and yet was already able to learn such a powerful technique. He's definitely not weaker than any ordinary Wanxiang Adept disciples. Sword Immortals...they are famous for their combat abilities. With the heart of a Sword Immortal and a sword art such as this...if he encounters someone at the same level of insight, he will win for sure."

As the short elder was speaking, the sword light in the form of a lotus flower was clashing repeatedly in midair against the giant, jade-green scorpion. With each clash, a few of the needles would be knocked loose. After six consecutive clashes, the giant, jade-green scorpion completely shattered, transforming back into countless flying needles.

"Slash." The protective armor of the Godneedles Golem was pierced by that sword light as well.

The entire Dao Debate Palace instantly fell silent. He had lost? The most

powerful of the Zifu Disciples, Qinghe, had actually lost? If even he had lost...could it be that one of their senior apprentice-brothers at the Wanxiang Adept level would enter the fray? For the sake of a new disciple, they were going to have a Wanxiang Adept do battle?

“Ji Ning wins.” The white-haired old man spoke out, and his voice echoed within the Dao Debate Palace.

Chapter 37: Two-Clawed Raindragon Guard

On the distant stone pillar, Qinghe rose to his feet, then clasped his hands. "I lost. I whole-heartedly acknowledge my defeat."

Ji Ning rose as well, also clasping his hands, and then he swept the entire palace with his gaze, looking towards each of his fellow disciples. In a clear voice, he said, "Are there any other fellow disciples who wish to exchange pointers with me?"

His voice echoed within the entire palace.

"Alas." Qinghe shook his head, then leapt three hundred meters and landed next to the white-haired elder. He took out two jade bottles, then placed them in front of the elder. This was the wager he had lost. Turning his head, he left.

For a period of time, the Dao Debate Palace was silent. Nobody took up the challenge.

"Even junior apprentice-brother Qinghe lost."

"The Dao Debates are a competition of one's comprehension of the Dao, as well as one's skills. It doesn't have much to do with one's elemental ki. Even many of the Wanxiang Adepts amongst us are only on par with junior apprentice-brother Qinghe."

"I imagine that only those who have comprehended multiple Dao Domains are capable of defeating junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning."

Of course there were people who could defeat Ning! In addition, there were quite a few. For example, those three reincarnated Immortals who were at the Wanxiang Adept level. Anyone who had comprehended a complete Dao Path could effortlessly crush Ning. There were also a pile of disciples who had comprehended multiple Dao Domains. But which one of them would stand out?

"Which of my senior fellow disciples wishes to provide me with some

guidance?” Ning stood there atop the stone pillar, speaking in a clear voice. “If no one else comes, then I shall retire.”

In this moment, Ning felt filled with a heroic aura. How joyous. He faced a group of supreme geniuses, and he, a newly recruited disciple, was challenging them. This really was a wonderful feeling.

“Since my other fellow disciples aren’t going to participate, then I’ll embarrass myself by volunteering.” A clear, cold voice rang out and a white-robed, white-haired youth strode forward. With a single step, he transformed into a streak of light which entered the side room. Soon, he returned with a golem by his side.

“That’s senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow!”

“Senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow is skilled as a Fiendgod Body Refiner and at close combat; he isn’t skilled in a golem-based Dao Debate!”

“I heard that senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow is already a two-clawed Raindragon Guard. In a real battle, he probably isn’t one whit inferior to an ordinary Primal Daoist. But senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow’s power primarily stems from his various divine abilities, his Bloodforged weapons, as well as his Fiendgod Body Refining Technique, the [Indestructible Bloodshadow Body]! In terms of controlling golems, though, he’s a bit weaker.”

As the white-robed, white-haired youth appeared, a buzz of conversation swept the entire palace. Ning’s ears twitched. He couldn’t help but feel secretly surprised. What a tremendous background this senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow had. The Rites of Bloodforging...although the likes of the Ji clan had never heard of it, the Black-White College had. Only, one needed five hundred black-white pellets to trade for the technique.

“And he’s actually a two-clawed Raindragon Guard as well!” Ning was privately shocked. After entering the Raindragon Guard, one would become an ordinary one-clawed Raindragon Guard, and the Black-White College would reward you with a thousand black-white pellets. If you became a two-clawed Raindragon Guard, you would be rewarded with five

thousand black-white pellets. Upon becoming a three-clawed Raindragon Guard, the reward would be increased to fifteen thousand black-white pellets...

However, it was very difficult to become a two-clawed Raindragon Guard. Generally speaking, only someone at the Primal Daoist level of power could become one. Only a very few, exceptionally monstrous Wanxiang Adepts were able to reach that level. As for that so-called 'genius' of Snowdragon Mountain, Xue Hongyi, by comparison, he was far inferior to this senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow.

"Swoosh!" The white-haired, white-robed Bloodshadow's body flickered, and he appeared on the opposite stone pillar. "Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." Bloodshadow stared towards Ning. "I'm more used to engaging in close combat. I'm not that skilled in controlling magic treasures to attack. However, I'm still a bit stronger than junior apprentice-brother Qinghe. You must be careful."

"I await your instructions, senior apprentice-brother," Ning said solemnly.

This was no joke. A freak capable of becoming a two-clawed Raindragon Guard, even one who was primarily a Fiendgod Body Refiner, definitely wouldn't be weak when controlling magic treasures. Fortunately, he would be doing so through the golems...and so his divine body and divine abilities would be of no use. Otherwise, there would be no need to compete at all. Ning would simply admit defeat.

"Begin!" The white-haired elder called out in a high voice. Rumble...the grand sealing barrier once more covered the entire arena.

Ning sat down in the lotus position. Bloodshadow did the same. "Junior apprentice-brother, be careful!" Bloodshadow called out in a cold voice. Instantly, the strange flying swords on the back of the Nineswords Golem began to fly out. Nine of the queer flying swords flew through the air, beginning to emit a dense, bloody light. The flying swords were all connected by the bloody light, and they quickly formed into an enormous...

Something. It had enormous cicada wings, a head with three horns, a

mouth that was as long and sharp as a blade, and a savage, flashing gaze. In fact, the killing aura coming from this creature was even more terrifying than that of the Direwolf which Bloodeater Bladask had summoned.

“Mosquito?” Ning, staring the beast that had appeared, couldn’t help but feel astonished. This was a titanic mosquito.

Swoosh! That sinister-looking, baleful giant mosquito of blood suddenly charged forward, howling through the air, its blade-mouth formed from one of the flying swords. The power and invisible pressure from this creature caused Ning’s heart to clench.

“[Neo-Tripartite Lotus Sword]!” Ning didn’t hesitate at all, immediately executing his most powerful sword art. Instantly, three flying swords flew out from the back of his Thousandwords Golem. They soon formed an enormous, blooming lotus flower of sword light which stabbed directly towards that baleful, heaven-defying mosquito of blood.

“Bang!” The two attacks were both as fast as lightning, and they instantly crisscrossed in the sky. The blooming lotus flower’s sword-light trembled, beginning to grow unstable.

“It’s going to collapse.”

“Although senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow is not skilled in using flying swords, it isn’t too hard for him to suppress a young, newly recruited disciple.”

“He’s won.”

Quite a few fellow apprentices nodded musingly to themselves. As for Northson, he clenched his fists nervously as he watched, his heart filled with worry. It was as though he himself wanted to personally charge up. “You must win. You must win.”

“Not good.” As soon as he began fighting, Ning began to sense how terrifying the penetrative power of the blood mosquito’s blade-mouth was. “Bang!” The blood mosquito moved as fast as a shadow, quickly smashing yet again against the lotus flower. Instantly, the blooming lotus flower

crumbled, and the three flying swords were scattered to one side.

However, Ning had expected this long ago. He had already prepared six more flying swords, which shot out from the back of the Thousandwords Golem.

“Go, go, go.” A savage look was in Ning’s eyes. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Every three flying swords formed a blooming lotus of sword-light, and even the three original scattered swords once more reformed into a giant lotus of sword-light. All of a sudden, the air was filled with three enormous flashes of sword light, each of which bloomed into giant loti. They flew out in a straight row, simultaneously striking towards the blood mosquito. Meanwhile, Ning’s eyes were filled with savagery as he controlled them in attacking.

“What!”

“He’s actually able to simultaneously unleash three of those [Tripartite Lotus Swords]?”

“How can this be?”

The spectating disciples were all speechless. Using top-tier sword arts was tremendously taxing on one’s mental faculties. For something like the [Tripartite Lotus Sword]...most would be able to unleash just a single one at most. To unleash three at the same time was rather ridiculous.

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At the corner of the Dao Debate Palace. Immortal Diancai nodded gently.

“He simultaneously executed multiple sword arts.” The nearby short elder shook his head repeatedly. “There’s only two possibilities. The first is that his current comprehension of the Dao is far beyond the level of this sword art, and so it is simplicity itself for him to use it; only then can one simultaneously use multiple sword arts. The second is that his soul is incomparably powerful, and so he can easily withstand the pressure this sword art creates, allowing him to use it multiple times simultaneously.”

Either one had a high level of insight, or one had an extremely powerful

soul.

“Your disciple’s soul...is at the divine sense level?” The short elder looked towards Immortal Diancai, who nodded. “Right.”

“As I thought,” the short elder said softly. “If he has a ‘divine soul’ at the divine sense level...I imagine he can execute two or three more sword-lights. This battle...your disciple is probably going to win.”

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The giant blood mosquito blurred, then transformed into three smaller blood mosquitoes, simultaneously defending against the three [Tripartite Lotus Swords].

Boom! Boom! Boom! There, in midair, the three [Tripartite Lotus Swords] battled against the three smaller blood mosquitoes. Everything was a blur as they clashed and battled against each other repeatedly. Each side wanted to break through the protective armor of the other’s golem, but they also wanted to block the enemy attacks...for now, they were battling to a standstill.

“Go, go!” Ning’s eyes were bloodshot, and the veins on his forehead were protruding. Clearly, he was now going all out. Instantly, six more flying swords flew out from the back of the Thousandwords Golem. The sky was soon filled with two more [Tripartite Lotus Sword] attacks. A total of five [Tripartite Lotus Swords] were surrounding and attacking the blood mosquitoes.

“Eh?” Seated in the distance, Bloodshadow’s face changed. He immediately willed the three blood mosquitoes to once more transform into a giant blood mosquito. The cicada-like wings of the giant blood mosquito fluttered, wrapping around that Nineswords Golem while the blade-beak struck repeatedly against those [Tripartite Lotus Swords].

The five [Neo-Tripartite Lotus Swords] attacked wildly in unison.

“Five!”

“Five [Tripartite Lotus Swords]?”

The spectating disciples were all rather stunned. They knew exactly how much stress would be placed on the soul when one executed five powerful sword arts simultaneously. To an ordinary person, dividing their mind to carry out just two tasks simultaneously was already very difficult. Dividing one's mind to execute multiple supreme sword arts...and five in total, at that!

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning's comprehension must be at a very high level, or his soul must be very strong.”

“He cannot be underestimated.”

“It seems as though senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow is about to suffer from it.”

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If one remains perpetually on the defense, one will eventually lose. Under the repeated strikes of Ning's five [Neo-Tripartite Lotus Swords], in the end, the blood mosquito wasn't able to block an attack, and the protective armor of the golem was breached.

“Ji Ning wins!” The white-haired elder called out in high voice. Only now did Ning finally relax.

He had won.

He had actually defeated a two-clawed Raindragon Guard! Although this Raindragon Guard was more skilled as a Fiendgod Body Refiner and in using divine abilities, and although this was just a competition of the arts one could use based on their comprehension of the Dao...the fact that he had defeated a two-clawed Raindragon Guard still filled Ning's heart with incomparable joy.

“I lost.” Seated atop the distant stone pillar, Bloodshadow rose to his feet. Shaking his head, he laughed. “Junior apprentice-brother, you are already so impressive after entering our school. In the future, you will definitely not be any weaker than me.”

“Senior apprentice-brother, you praise me too much.” Ning rose as well. “If we were in a real life-and-death battle, I probably wouldn't have been

able to withstand a single blow from you.”

Bloodshadow laughed. This junior apprentice-brother of his was incredibly talented, and yet clear-minded and modest. He hadn't turned smug from his victory in the Dao Debate. Most likely, in the future, this youth would have astonishing accomplishments. He was worth befriending.

“Haha...” Bloodshadow laughed, then with a flicker, disappeared from the arena, reappearing before the white-haired elder, who he gave two jade bottles to.

Ning took a deep breath. He had gone all out in his earlier battle against Bloodshadow. The sword art he had used was the strongest one available to him, and by relying on the power of his soul, he had gone all out to generate five of those [Tripartite Lotus Swords]! This was his limit. He had nothing further up his sleeve...and would probably lose the next match.

However, if he was going to fight, he was going to fight to the bitter end.

“Are there any other senior fellow disciples who would like to exchange pointers with me?” Ning looked about the room and spoke in a clear voice. His voice echoed in every corner of the palace.

Chapter 38: My Heart Holds Only the Sword – The Sword Immortal's Path

The entire Dao Debate Palace once more fell silent. Everyone turned to look at their neighbors. Since Ji Ning was even able to defeat Bloodshadow in a Dao Debate, defeating him would be no easy task. Who would be the next?

“His heart...it has changed!” In that quiet corner, the short elder suddenly spoke out. “This last Dao Debate was a form of baptism for your disciple.” Immortal Diancai turned to look towards Ning as well. There was no hesitating in Ning's eyes at all; instead, there was a frightening desire for battle.

“Right.” Immortal Diancai nodded lightly. “His heart has indeed changed. It is purer now. Before this, he had many miscellaneous thoughts in his heart, but right now, all he desires is the next battle. This is indeed a rare baptism for his Dao-heart.”

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Ning had only one thought in his heart right now; to engage in the next battle! If he was going to fight, he was going to fight to the very end!

The entire Dao Debate Palace was silent for three breaths. Finally, an azure-robed woman walked out.

“It is senior apprentice-sister Whitesnow.”

“Senior apprentice-sister Whitesnow's [Celestial Silknet Formation] is extremely powerful. In terms of just the Dao, not even senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow is a match for senior apprentice-sister Whitesnow.”

“Right. I wonder if this junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning has anything else left up his sleeve. If he does not, he is probably going to lose.” Conversations were going on everywhere.

As for senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, surrounded by many fellow disciples, he stared into the distance, then said softly, “If my guess is

correct, that was the limit of junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning's power. This next battle...junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning is going to lose."

"When he encounters junior apprentice-sister Whitesnow's [Celestial Silknet Formation], this junior apprentice-brother is going to lose." This was the soft comment by the fat, sloppy-looking youth as well.

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"Senior apprentice-sister. Will junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning win?" Ninelotus was next to the black-robed maiden, who stared into the distance. "Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning is probably at his limit. This should be his final battle."

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The short elder, standing in the corner of the room, nodded as well. "It's about time. This series of Dao Debates should be coming to a conclusion. Your disciple is at his limit."

"Right." Immortal Diancai nodded lightly, continuing to stare towards his disciple...

On the pillar. Ning stood there, waiting quietly.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, win. Win! I believe in you. You will definitely win." Mu Northson's fists were clenched tightly, and he called out in a high voice in the distance. Ning smiled towards him.

The azure-robed woman stepped out from the side-door, leaping gracefully atop the opposing stone pillar. She looked towards the distant Ning, her gaze bringing a cold, quiet feeling. Looking at her was like looking at a sickly, yet beautiful woman. She finally spoke out. "Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, I have chosen the Skynet Golem. Be careful."

"Senior apprentice-sister, please feel free!" Ning sat down in the lotus position, and the azure-robed woman did the same. The two stared at each other.

"Begin!" The white-haired elder let out a loud shout. Rumble...the grand sealing barrier once more covered the entire battle arena.

“Go!” The gaze of the azure-robed woman, seated in the lotus position, was cold and dim. The Skynet Golem beneath her instantly began to emit one line of silk after another, transforming into streaks of light.

“[Neo-Tripartite Lotus Sword]!” A sharp look flashed through Ning’s eyes. Not hesitating at all, he immediately, consecutively released fifteen flying swords from the Thousandwords Golem, creating five [Tripartite Lotus Swords]. These five flashes of sword-light...they blossomed into lotus flowers, streaking forward to greet the flashing lines of silk.

Whoosh...

The silken rays of light suddenly slashed out in various arcs. Instantly, the entire world seemed to change, as these silken ribbons of light actually formed a giant, completely sealed spherical region, trapping Ning’s five [Neo-Tripartite Lotus Swords] within them. The five flashes of sword-light wildly struck at one location, and a large bulge appeared on the side of the silken ribbons of light, but it still successfully kept the sword-light trapped within.

“Constrict!” The azure-robed woman, seated in the lotus position, shouted softly. The silken ribbons of light, in the shape of that giant sphere, began to swivel and shrink, beginning to crush down upon the five flashes of sword-light within it.

Although Ning could release these fifteen flying swords and control new ones...if he wasn’t able to defeat this technique, even if he unleashed more flying swords, the end result would simply be that they would be trapped.

“Break!” Ning strove to control his swords to break through.

“Go.” The azure-robed woman once more pointed. Whoosh! Yet another silken ribbon of light flew out from the golem, this one moving directly towards Ning’s Thousandwords Golem.

“Hmph.” Ning’s gaze turned cold. Three more flying swords flew out from the Thousandwords Golem’s back, transforming to yet another [Tripartite Lotus Sword] and intercepting the ribbon.

There were six [Tripartite Lotus Swords] that had been unleashed, and

Ning's eyes were now completely bloodshot. Taxing. This was incredibly taxing. But Ning didn't think of anything else. In his heart, there was only one thought; to use all of his power and fight to the bitter end! To force his flying swords to unleash the greatest amount of power possible!

In this moment, the only thing in Ning's heart...was the sword!

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Within the arena.

Ning and the azure-robed woman stared at each other, the golems they were controlling clashing against each other time and time again. Clearly, the azure-robed woman held the upper hand...but no matter what, she wasn't able to defeat Ji Ning. In particular, with that giant, spherical region, one enormous bulge after another would appear. Clearly, the five rays of sword light within were still struggling, and with greater and greater power. The azure-robed woman couldn't help but focus a great deal of her attention on that sphere.

In the corner of the Dao Debate Palace. The short elder's eyes suddenly lit up, and he murmured to himself, "My heart holds only the sword?"

Immortal Diancai stared at his disciple as well. He, too, had noticed Ning's change. "My heart holds only the sword!" Immortal Diancai said softly, "Finally, his sword-heart has finally begun to reach this level."

"Now things are unclear," the short old man sighed. "This disciple of yours truly is a rare talent. This Dao Debate Palace is currently filled with the disciples of our Black-White College. So many geniuses are present... this disciple of yours is welcoming all challengers, and so in the end, he will definitely be defeated. And yet, this process has caused his sword-heart to grow brighter and brighter."

"It's still early. Let's see if he can actually comprehend it thoroughly." Immortal Diancai stared at Ji Ning. Stared at him without blinking.

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Simultaneously executing six [Tripartite Lotus Swords] was Ning at his absolute limit, and he even felt his head going dizzy. But Ning didn't think

of anything else; the only thing he wanted to do was fight! Fight with all his power!

His heart was completely focused on those flying swords of his. In this moment...Ning, who had gained insight into the heart of a Sword Immortal long ago, was currently seeing his own Sword Immortal's heart grow brighter and brighter. In fact, one memory after another began to flit up through his mind.

“Ji Ning, I am going to demonstrate the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] to you – the Lustrous Sword-Heart!” Prior to this series of Dao Debates, Ning had gone to see Immortal Diancai, who had carefully explained the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] to him.

“This is the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]!”

Sword-light flashed like fire, slashing through the air but not dissipating.

“This, too, is the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]!”

A ray of sword-light flashed like water, circling and spinning in the air, as though the sky itself had been parted from the world by this layer of water..

“This, too, is the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]!”

A cyan light that tore open the skies themselves.

One sword technique another another...they were clearly different sword techniques. Some were average in power, while others were incredibly powerful. But according to Immortal Diancai, all of these techniques were the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword].

“The [Three-Foot Sword] is a supreme sword technique which leads to one of the Grand Daos, the Dao of the Sword. In order to become a true Sword Immortal who has comprehended the Grand Dao of the Sword, the first thing you need is a sword-heart. Over many years of training, you have long ago unconsciously developed the heart of a Sword Immortal, but the so called sword-heart requires one to truly have supreme loyalty to the ‘sword’. You must understand your own sword-heart.”

“Once you truly comprehend your sword-heart and learn what it means to be a Sword Immortal...only then will you have opened the gates to actually becoming a Sword Immortal. That will be the moment when you will naturally learn how to execute the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword].”

“The first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – Lustrous Sword-Heart!”

“After your sword-heart becomes lustrous and bright, you will be able to see the true path a Sword Immortal must follow.”

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The scenes of Immortal Diancai displaying the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], the ‘Lustrous Sword-Heart’, played over and over in his mind. Some of the attacks were extremely weak, while others were extremely strong. However, all of them were flashing through Ning’s mind, and Ning felt vaguely moved; he began to dimly understand something, although he didn’t fully comprehend yet. However, he knew that he had already begun to gain a few insights.

Whoosh! Sword-light continued to flash and dance. The [Tripartite Lotus Sword] continued to flash in the air, and the sword-light grew sharper and sharper, the more growing mightier and mightier, to the point where they began to press down on the silken ribbons of light.

“Rumble...” The five [Tripartite Lotus Swords] within the enormous spherical region were beginning to struggle more and more forcefully as well. One giant bulge after another appeared on the surface of the sphere of silken light, each bulge greater than the last.

Whitesnow, the distant azure-robed woman who was seated in the lotus position, began to sweat.

“What?!” Holyfire, watching from afar, had a changed look on his face.

The fat, sloppy-looking youth’s eyes instantly turned round. “How the hell...he actually, he actually made a breakthrough in comprehending the sword.”

The black-robed woman’s face, formerly as cold as frost, suddenly had a

look of shock appear on it. “A Sword Immortal?”

.....

BANG!

A sudden explosion rang out. The sphere of silken light, which had been stretched to its limits, finally exploded. Silk ribbons scattered everywhere, and the six [Tripartite Lotus Swords] once more rose into the skies with incomparable sharpness. The power of the swords was clearly much greater than before, and they charged directly towards the Skynet Golem. Soon, the protective armor of the Skynet Golem was shattered.

“Ji Ning wins!” The white-haired elder called out in a high voice.

A look of disbelief filled the face of the azure-robed woman. Someone had actually made a breakthrough mid-battle? She couldn’t help but mumble to herself, “A monster, he really is a monster of the Dao of the Sword.”

Ning rose to his feet, turning his gaze towards the entire hall. He called out in a high voice, “Are there any other senior fellow disciples who wish to exchange pointers with me?”

.....

The short elder in the corner couldn’t help but say, “A true genius of the Dao of the Sword. He really is a genius of the Dao of the Sword. This Ji Ning was born to walk the path of the Sword Immortals! His innate affinity towards the sword surpasses that of others; in fact, we can use the word ‘monstrous’ to describe it. In addition, he has a heart which is supremely devoted to the sword.”

“Right.” Immortal Diancai stared at the distant Ji Ning. “He was meant to be a Sword Immortal.”

“Yet another disciple has gone up.” The short elder nodded. “It’s good that he did. What Ji Ning needs right now is battle experience. The greater a pressure is brought to bear on him, the more lustrous his sword-heart will become.”

“Perhaps...through these battles...he might even comprehend the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – Lustrous Sword-Heart!” Immortal Diancai mused to himself.

.....

Ning stood there atop the stone pillar. On the other stone pillar was a black-robed youth. Ning’s eyes seemed to be filled with the light of the sword, and he said in a clear voice, “Senior apprentice-brother, please make your move!”

Chapter 39: [Three-Foot Sword] – The First Stance

“Junior apprentice-brother, for you to gain sudden enlightenment regarding the sword in a moment of battle means that you truly are a marvelous talent for training in the sword. No wonder Immortal Diancai took you on as his disciple.” The black-robed youth said calmly, “Junior apprentice-brother, my techniques are far more vicious than senior apprentice-sister Whitesnow. You must be careful.”

“Senior apprentice-brother, feel free to use everything you have!” Ning sat down in the lotus position, and the black-robed man did so as well. The two stared at each other from afar.

The surrounding area was silent once again. Previously, the two Wanxiang Adepts, Bloodshadow and Whitesnow, had been defeated consecutively. The person who had now joined the fray, Venomblood, was naturally even more formidable than the two of them in a discourse on the Dao. Otherwise, he wouldn't have come.

“Go! Go! Go!” The black-robed youth's eyes flashed with cold light. Instantly, oily-jade hooks began to fly out from the back of the golem he was controlling in the arena below. Eighteen oily-green poisoned hooks slashed through the air, and while flying over, the tips of these eighteen poisoned hooks began to faintly glow with a venomous, tricolor light. The eighteen poisoned hooks flew straight towards the Thousandwords Golem which Ning was controlling.

It seemed as though the power of this attack was compressed; he didn't sense any danger at all.

“Eh?” Ning's face changed slightly. A tricolored poisonous light? Previously, he had fought against Bloodshadow and Whitesnow. Bloodshadow was apparently someone who focused on a single Dao, and had mixed in his insights into other Daos into his techniques; much like Ning, he had reached the Dao Domain level in just a single Dao, and not in the others. However, Bloodshadow had reached an extremely deep level

of understanding into that Dao, most likely far surpassing Ning's understanding of his own. Ning had to rely on the power of his 'divine soul' to defeat Bloodshadow.

As for Whitesnow, she should have mastered two different Dao Domains! And this Venomblood...should have mastered three different Dao Domains!

Immortal Diancai had told him that after he reached the level of having three Dao Domains, he would be able to unleash the true power of his [Tripartite Lotus Sword]. But this Venomblood had already reached this level.

"So what if you have gained three Dao Domains? Go!" A fierce sword-light flashed in Ning's eyes, and eighteen flying swords instantly flew out from the back of his Thousandwords Golem.

The eighteen flying swords slashed through the air, instantly booming into lotus flowers and transforming into eighteen flashing sword-lights of the [Tripartite Lotus Swords]. Although a sword-light formed from three swords was very powerful...when dealing with a foe who shot out eighteen attacks, Ning naturally would use eighteen of his own to deal with it!

A competition on quantity? Ji Ning had never feared anyone in this regard!

"Cling!" "Clang!" "Swish!"

Eighteen blooming lotuses of sword-light on one side, and eighteen venomous tricolored hooks on the other. It was as though eighteen Immortal practitioners were controlling them; they clashed in midair time and time again.

Those eighteen venomous tricolored hooks possessed shocking power and were able to completely suppress Ning's attacks, but Ning's sword-light attacks were aligned with water, and possessed tremendous resilience and elasticity. In addition, the tremendous pressure caused Ning to once more enter that earlier battle-mode; to enter the mindset of discarding everything, leaving behind only the sword in his heart!

My heart holds only the sword!

“Kill! Kill! Kill!” The lotuses of sword-light flew about, growing sharper and sharper, to the point where even the distant, spectating disciples could visibly notice that the power with which Ning controlled his [Tripartite Lotus Swords] was slowly growing. The sword-lights seemed to be growing ‘sharper’, to the point where they were slowly taking on a life of their own.

They were continuing to grow more powerful! The might of the lotus sword-lights continuously rose!

.....

“He’s still in a prajna-state of comprehending the sword.” Holyfire stared into the distance. “This junior apprentice-brother possesses truly terrifying potential. He truly is a marvelous student of the sword.”

.....

“The power of the sword-light is continuously rising. Can it be that this junior apprentice-brother is really going to enter the first stage of the Sword Immortal today?” The fat, sloppy-looking youth watched quietly. On the path of Immortals, where were many subtle, varying branches of enlightenment, such as the ‘Yin-Yang branch’, the ‘Taiji branch’, the ‘Sword Immortal branch’, and more.

Sword Immortals traversed the Grand Dao of the Sword! Sword Immortals had always been famous for their combat power, and could be described as the branch most suited for combat. For example, Immortal Diancai, or Immortal Northwalker, the most famous figure in the entire history of the Black-White College. They were all Sword Immortals!

.....

“Formidable.” The black-robed maiden let out a soft exclamation of praise as well. As for Ninelotus, upon hearing this, she immediately stared towards Ning in the arena, her eyes filled with curiosity.

.....

In the corner of the Dao Debate Palace, the short elder was leisurely

holding a calabash of wine. Taking a mouthful of the Immortal wine, he glanced sideways at Immortal Diancai, who was staring at the battle without blinking. Fivecraze let out a snickering, strange laugh. “Junior apprentice-brother Diancai, don’t worry. Judging from the situation...this disciple of yours is almost there. Soon, he shall truly understand what his sword-heart is.”

“Mm.” Immortal Diancai’s lips moved slightly, but his eyes continued to focus unblinkingly on the battle going on. This was, after all, his very first disciple.

.....

The black-robed youth, Venomblood, continued to sit there in the lotus position, the look on his face growing increasingly ugly. “How can it be like this? A prajna-state of enlightenment should have a limit; how it is that his sword-light is continuously rising in power? At first, he was at a disadvantage, but now he’s slowly beginning to gain the upper hand. When exactly will there be a limit to this prajna-state?”

“What the hell is he gaining insights into?” The black-robed youth gritted his teeth.

For the likes of the Sloppy Daoist and the other supreme disciples, they were able to tell at a single glance that Ning was walking onto the path of Sword Immortals. However, Venomblood’s experience was clearly a bit lacking; all he knew was that Ning was in the middle of a prajna-state of enlightenment, but he had no idea that Ning was embarking onto the path of Sword Immortals.

In midair, those eighteen lotus flowers of sword-light clashed more and more frenetically against those eighteen venomous tricolored hooks. Those venomous hooks were struggling as much as they could...but they were clearly at a disadvantage.

“Grr!” The black-robed youth’s gaze flashed with a fierce light, and a berserk feeling filled his heart. Those eighteen venomous hooks instantly began to transform, forming an enormous venomous tricolored hook that was more than thirty meters long. The entire venomous tricolored hook

glowed with a hazy light, and it swept directly towards Ning's Thousandwords Golem.

"Break!" The eighteen lotus flowers of sword-light instantly transformed as well. With six flying swords forming a formation base, they instantly changed into an enormous [Tripartite Lotus Sword] which went to welcome the attack.

"BANG!" An explosive collision. The venomous hook was instantly blown apart. The enormous [Tripartite Lotus Sword] howled through the air, piercing directly through the protective armor over the body of the Venomhook Golem.

"Ji Ning wins!" The white-haired elder's voice rang out once more, and at the same time, the grand sealing barrier began to disappear.

"I lost." A gloomy look was in the eyes of the black-robed youth, who had struggled for so long and yet had still lost. He gave the fur-clad youth seated atop the other stone pillar a glance from the corner of his eyes. Then, he leapt forward, transforming into a streak of light as he left the battlefield. He handed the two jade bottles to the white-haired elder, then turned and left.

The entire Dao Debate Palace was completely silent for a moment. And then, all sorts of discussions rang out.

"He lost."

"Senior apprentice-brother Venomblood lost. Senior apprentice-brother Venomblood has gained three Dao Domains."

"Even senior apprentice-brother Venomblood lost. What should we do next?"

Variations on this conversation filled the entire Dao Debate Palace. Many of the disciples were saying the same thing; if even Venomblood had lost, which of them should go up next?

"Well done! Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, well done!" Northson resolutely supported Ning. He was the only person who called out in support of Ning...and he and Ning were the only members in the new

disciples 'faction'.

The other fellow disciples were all chatting amongst themselves, and also discussing who amongst them should be the next to go up. Only, none of them noticed that something unusual was happening to Ji Ning right now.

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In fact, not even the Primal Daoists that were watching this through a water-scrying technique were able to notice. After all, they weren't actually present and able to witness things firsthand. Only two did – Immortal Fivecraze and Immortal Diancai. They noticed something unusual about Ning.

After defeating the black-robed youth, Venomblood, Ning hadn't risen to his feet as he had in the past. Instead, he continued to stay seated in the lotus position.

"Sense his aura." Immortal Fivecraze's eyes were growing brighter and brighter. "Ji Ning's aura...his aura is sharpening and intensifying."

"Right." Immortal Diancai's eyes were shining as well. He stared fixedly at Ning, seated in the lotus position atop the stone pillar. For a powerful Sword Immortal like Diancai, he could feel that the distant Ji Ning was also beginning to emit a similar sword aura as Diancai himself had. Although it was incredibly weak, it was slowly beginning to manifest.

"He's growing more and more powerful." Immortal Fivecraze couldn't even be bothered to drink wine. He stared excitedly at the distant Ning. "I feel as though he has completely changed into a sword."

"He made the breakthrough." A smile appeared on the face of Immortal Diancai as well.

As soon as his words came out...the distant Ning arose from the lotus position, coming to his feet.

.....

When he had been battling against Whitesnow, Ning's mind had

become filled with the scenes of his master, Immortal Diancai, teaching him about the sword. At that time, he had gained a vague feeling for what the 'Lustrous Sword-Heart' was. Now that he had battled Venomblood, his insights had grown even deeper, and the power of his sword-light was growing increasingly great as well.

In the instant he had defeated Venomblood, he felt as though he were a bubble that had stretched to its limit, then instantly exploded. All of those doubts and questions in his heart had vanished. Ning's heart had become truly lustrous!

"If you wish to become a Sword Immortal, you must have the utmost sincerity towards the sword! The sword, and the sword in your heart. If you have the sword in your heart, then even with a rock, a throwing hammer, or a wooden stick, you'll still be able to execute sword arts."

"For a Sword Immortal, everything is part of the Dao of the Sword. The Rainwater Dao, the Daos of Wind, Fire, and other Daos...they will all be merged into the Dao of the Sword."

"The sword is my body. The sword is my life. The sword is my path."

Ning opened his eyes. His eyes, his entire body...every single part of him seemed to be brimming with sword-ki! It was as though Ning himself was a peerless sword!

The sword of a Sword Immortal was the Sword Immortal himself. He was the sword, and he could use any magic treasures in executing sword arts.

The sword of a Sword Immortal was his Dao. This Dao, when taken to its absolute peak, led one to supremacy amongst the Three Realms.

The sword of a Sword Immortal was what he relied on. On his path as an Immortal cultivator, only by using the sword...would he be able to carve a path to the very top. If Gods blocked him, he would kill Gods; if Buddhas blocked him, he would slay the Buddhas. He would carve a path through all which would oppose him, and he would rely on his sword to do this!

"I want for my mother and father to be able to live forever."

“I want my loved ones to be able to live joyful lives.”

“I want for tragedies to never befall me.”

“I want to never again be controlled by the hands of fate!”

Ning’s sword-heart was now completely shining and translucent; all of his hopes, his desires, his dreams, they were all embodied within his sword! His body, his life, even his future hopes and aspirations; they were all entrusted to the sword. The sword was what he would rely on to carve out his future and his path.

“The first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], the Lustrous Sword-Heart.” Ning instantly comprehended the very first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword].

There were many different ways in which the first stance could be executed. What one needed to do was to release the technique in accordance with the insight one had gained into one’s own sword-heart. That would be enough.

.....

Ning rose to his feet. Standing there, atop the stone pillar, he stared at his fellow disciples in the Dao Debate Palace, then once more spoke out.

“Are there any other fellow disciples who wish to provide me with guidance?”

Chapter 40: That Chop

The Black-White College disciples within the Dao Debate Palace began to turn their gazes towards a small number of people. Venomblood was already quite a powerful Wanxiang Adept in terms of the Dao Debates, and yet even he had been defeated by Ji Ning. Then, in order to defeat Ji Ning...they would need someone even more powerful. There were only so many who fit the criteria.

There were only ten or so disciples who had multiple Dao Domains and were extremely strong.

“Given the situation, I would like to test your strength for myself, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” A white-robed man who was standing next to Holyfire suddenly stood out with a calm laugh.

“Northmont Blackcurrent?”

“Senior apprentice-brother Northmont Blackcurrent is about to engage. Senior apprentice-brother Blackcurrent’s ‘Five Energies Grand Grappling Hand’ technique is astonishingly strong, far more so than senior apprentice-brother Venomblood’s technique.”

“If senior apprentice-brother Blackcurrent engages, he will definitely win.”

Debates rang out once again. Blackcurrent, amongst the Wanxiang Adepts of the Black-White College, could be considered a well-known figure. But of course, in normal, real battles, the Fiendgod disciples would be even stronger. The likes of Bloodshadow, for example, possessed real combat power that was simply heaven-defying. On the battlefield, Fiendgod Body Refiners possessed an innate advantage to begin with.

Although Blackcurrent was a Ki Refiner, if one only looked at comprehension of the Dao, he definitely was one of the most impressive of the disciples who had comprehended multiple Dao Domains. He vastly surpassed Venomblood and the others.

“Northmont Blackcurrent?” Ning looked towards him, immediately

recognizing him. When he had first gone to visit the Black-White College, he had encountered this Blackcurrent fellow. Back then, Blackcurrent had held him in no regard. “Brother Baiwei, back then, described this Northmont Blackcurrent as a viper dressed in a sheepskin. Now, it seems... at least I see the sheepskin part.”

Blackcurrent had a smile on his face. He moved with leisurely grace, and was dressed in white clothes. Indeed, he appeared quite elegant, and it seemed as though he had quite a few friends.

Soon, Blackcurrent emerged from the side room with a construct. With a step, he flew directly atop the stone pillar, and his golem also landed at the arena below.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Blackcurrent stood on the pillar, staring into the distance. Laughing, he said, “When I first met you, I had no idea that I would be discussing the Dao with you today at the Dao Debate Palace. The changes of the world truly are marvelous and remarkable.”

“To be able to battle with you, senior apprentice-brother...I, too, am amazed by the countless transformations of the world,” Ning replied.

Blackcurrent nodded gently, but the desire for combat was quite evident in his eyes. Because he was born from a fairly remote branch of the Northmont clan of Stillwater, he had always looked down upon those main lineage disciples who had relied on the protection of their parents. He had long ago relegated Ning to the side of people such as Baiwei. Ning’s earlier repeated successes had caused him to feel all the more unhappy.

“His talent is quite exceptional. However, it’s enough for him to have won this many battles,” Blackcurrent mused to himself.

Suddenly...a white-haired, white-robed man standing amidst the many fellow disciples within the Dao Debate Palace spoke out. “Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Ning turned his to look, and as he did, he clasped his hands. “Senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow.”

Bloodshadow was a bit weaker in terms of the Dao Debate, but in a real

battle, he was definitely one of the top-ranked disciples of the third generation.

“Junior apprentice-brother, first you defeated three Zifu Disciples, then you defeated myself, Whitesnow, and Venomblood. And now, you are going to battle with Northmont Blackcurrent...I am truly in admiration of you. Junior apprentice-brother Blackcurrent is exceptionally talented, while you, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, are a peerless genius. It is hard to say who will win this fight. I’m willing to take out a treasure and add to the intrigue of this battle. If you are able to defeat junior apprentice-brother Blackcurrent, I will give this treasure to you.”

As soon as these words came out, there was instantly a hullabaloo. Bloodshadow’s words were rather ‘damaging’ to Blackcurrent’s face, and he clearly was closer to Ji Ning’s side.

“Hmph.” Blackcurrent felt some unhappiness in his heart, but Bloodshadow was one of the third generation disciples he could least afford to irritate. On the surface, he maintained his calm, smiling demeanor.

“How can I accept this?” Ning immediately said. “No need to be humble,” Bloodshadow replied. “This treasure is a Mortal-ranked magic treasure; to me, it’s not very useful. When I was carrying out an assignment for the Raindragon Guard, I accidentally entered an Immortal estate, and I was lucky enough to manage to pick up a sword formation technique. I saw that you, junior apprentice-brother, are skilled in controlling flying swords, and quite a few of them at once at that. This flying sword formation I acquired is a [Heavenly Spirits, Earthly Fiends] sword formation with a total of 108 flying swords. They are useless to me, but to you, junior apprentice-brother, they will definitely be of great use. However, if you want to acquire them, you’ll have to show off your abilities in this battle, junior apprentice-brother.”

The white-robed, white-haired Bloodshadow had a smile on his face. He did indeed have a very good opinion of Ji Ning.

He had also been the first of the Wanxiang Adepts to engage Ning. In

reality, he was simply 'throwing a brick to attract jade', seeking to draw out the others. He often engaged in life-and-death battles, and so his senses were exceptionally acute. He could vaguely sense that the distant Ji Ning was like a sword, and he had understood that this junior apprentice-brother of his would have an unlimited potential.

In taking out this set of flying swords...although he said that it would be the reward for a victory, even if Ning lost, when the time came, Bloodshadow could still find an excuse to give it to Ning. And so, the two would naturally grow closer to each other.

"I will definitely work hard," Ning said. How could this Mortal-ranked flying sword formation be truly useless to Bloodshadow? If nothing else, he could take it to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain and exchange it for quite a few elemental badges. Clearly, this senior apprentice-brother wanted to befriend him.

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"That kid Bloodshadow is the first to move to befriend your disciple." The short elder held the gourd of wine in his hand, and was drinking it while chatting leisurely.

Immortal Diancai nodded lightly. "Bloodshadow is also a truly heroic figure amongst the third generation."

"He stands on the side of your disciple, so he's a heroic figure?" The short elder gave him a stare, then said with pursed lips, "Still, to tell the truth, although this kid Bloodshadow is a bit slow in terms of comprehending the Dao, he's moved stably and confidently. In particular... he's quite good at enduring suffering. Of the various Fiendgod Body Refining Techniques, the [Indestructible Bloodshadow Body] is described as the most painful technique to train in. If one is successful, however, the results are bizarrely, astonishingly powerful. In addition, this kid, Bloodshadow, often takes on dangerous missions for the Raindragon Guard. With his special, unbreakable body, he has walked the path between life and death on multiple occasions, and his power is increasing at a faster and faster rate. His divine ability is fairly powerful as well,

now...when he first joined, he was unremarkable, but now he's one of the most powerful third generation disciples. I imagine that in a few more centuries, he will have become one of the most powerful members of our Black-White College."

"You have such a good view of him?" Immortal Diancai was surprised. The short elder sighed. "Although comprehending the Dao is important, the Dao-heart is even more important. Once you've seen as much as I have, you will understand."

"Alright." Immortal Diancai gave Bloodshadow a long, deep look.

"Battle's starting." The short elder's eyes lit up as he stared at the distant battle. Ning and Blackcurrent had each already begun to control their golems in combat. "Junior apprentice-brother Diancai, who do you think will win? As I see it, although your disciples has comprehended the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], that first stance involves comprehending one's own sword-heart!"

"What is his sword-heart like? No one knows. How powerful will the techniques he unleashes be? Hard to say. But this 'Five Energies Grand Grappling Hand' of Blackcurrent is far more powerful than the technique that Venomblood kid was using." The short elder looked at Immortal Diancai, eagerly awaiting a look of concern to appear on his face.

But Immortal Diancai remained as solemn as ever. "What is his sword-heart like? We'll know if we watch."

"Oh." The short elder mumbled a response, then shook his head and sighed. "Ohoho, your disciple is at a disadvantage. Seems as though it'll be dangerous for him."

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Everyone watching what was going on within the sealed arena was holding their breaths.

"Will this junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning be able to produce another miracle?" Holyfire's eyes were narrowed.

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“It seems as though the sharpness of his sword-light is no longer increasing. Has his prajna-state come to an end?” The fat, sloppy-looking youth frowned as he watched. “If it has already come to an end, it’s hard to say who will win.”

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“Senior apprentice-sister, will junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning be able to win?” Ninelotus asked. The black-robed maiden, the Rainbowflame Fairy, just watched silently without saying a word.

.....

“Win, win, win.” Northson and Winterain were standing together in a corner. Northson’s fists were tightly clenched, and his eyes were round.

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Within the grand sealing formation. Although Ning, seated in the lotus position atop the stone pillar, was at a definite disadvantage, those nine [Tripartite Lotus Swords] were continuing to struggle and resist the enormous ‘Five Energies Grand Grappling Hand’. However, by the looks of things, if they exchanged a few more blows, the [Tripartite Lotus Swords] were going to collapse.

Ning was very calm. He didn’t panic in the slightest, which caused Blackcurrent to laugh coldly in his heart. “It’s about time for you to lose.”

What he didn’t know was that Ning was currently storing up his power. In his heart, the various insights that he had gained into the sword were surging out in waves.

“To be carefree! To do as I please!”

“To force even fate to beat a retreat!”

Ning’s eyes suddenly exploded with a terrifying sword-intent, and an astonishing sword-intent radiated from his entire body.

“The first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – Lustrous Sword-Heart!” Ning’s gaze solidified, and instantly, a rumbling sound could be heard. Every single flying sword on the back of the Thousandwords Golem flew

out, including the flying swords he had used before. There were a thousand flying swords, clustered there in the air, and they caused all of the spectators to be completely shocked. So many flying swords?! What were they going to do?

Every single one of the thousand flying swords was pointing directly to the 'Five Energies Grand Grappling Hand' ahead of them.

"CHOP!" Ning bellowed forth this single word! The thousand flying swords instantly blossomed into lotus flowers, and at the same time, they all chopped forward. The thousand flying swords had instantly transformed into a single, enormous sword-light. Carrying irresistible power and majesty, they chopped forward!

This single chop! It contained the invincible will of Ning's sword-heart!

In his past life, Ning had experienced the information explosion era. As the saying goes, one who enters the red dust of the mortal world [1] will depart while covered in it. The distracting thoughts generated by the information explosion era were even more astonishing than the distracting thoughts generated during the era of wandering barbarians.

[tl: [1] = 'Red dust' is a Buddhist phrase referring to the mortal world, and all the unhappiness that exists within it. For a similar reason, 'women of the red dust' is actually an old-fashioned euphemism for prostitutes.]

The experiences he had in this life, the lives and deaths of those he loved, the warmth of family; it was these things that allowed Ning's heart to slowly grow lustrous and be purified of those distracting thoughts.

If a person were to live in a perfect utopia, a peach garden beyond all worldly matters, then perhaps that person would be able to maintain a pure, lustrous heart. But this sort of pure, lustrous heart would be a very weak one. Upon encountering any setbacks or seductions, it might easily crumble.

But Ning had seen far too many things in his past life, in the information explosion era. Tormented and wracked by pain, he had watched as others freely ran about, read books, had lovers, and more. How painful and tortured that had been!

His heart had long ago been stained by the red dust of the mortal world. In this life, the love and warmth of family had slowly polished it bright, and now, his heart was all the stronger and all the more unbreakable!

It was admittedly praiseworthy for someone who stood at the peak of a mountain to maintain perfect purity, but for someone to be born from the sludge to remain unsullied was even harder to do!

“This is my first stance of my [Three-Foot Sword]!”

“Chop!”

“Chop!!!”

“CHOP!!!”

Ning roared the word ‘chop’ three times, and the sword-light in his eyes was visible to the naked eye. That powerful sword-intent, that mighty, irresistible will; it caused even those two Immortals watching from afar to be moved.

BOOM!!!!!!

The thousand flying swords, linked into a single, massive burst of sword-light, were all chopping in unison towards a single direction!

Although that mighty, heaven-defying ‘Five Energies Grand Grappling Hand’ was able to resist for just a brief moment, with a mighty boom, it shattered apart like glass.

Chapter 41: Yu Wei and Ji Ning

Some of the extremely high-ranking disciples who had been seated, such as senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, the fat, sloppy-looking youth, and the black-robed maiden had all risen to their feet. Looks of shock were on their faces, and they stared, stunned, at the fur-clad youth atop the stone pillar in the distance.

As for Northmont Blackcurrent, located on the other stone pillar within the grand sealing formation, his face had instantly turned ashen.

“I, I lost?”

“I, how could I have lost? How could I have lost?” Blackcurrent’s eyes were filled with disbelief. He was an incomparably prideful figure. He didn’t even hold high-level members of the Northmont clan, such as main lineage members like Northmont Baiwei, with any regard. This was precisely because he was absolutely confident in his own abilities. But a new disciple who had just entered the school, and one who was extremely friendly terms with Baiwei to boot...had actually defeated him in a ‘Dao Debate’, an arena he had been extremely self-confident in.

“It was that sword...that sword...” Blackcurrent’s mind still clearly remembered that terrifying sword, that chop that was launched simultaneously by a thousand flying swords. It felt as though that chop had cut a scar straight into his Dao-heart.

“What a terrifying sword. Only when facing that sword head-on can a person truly understand how terrifying it is. A sword with no regrets and nothing held back; a sword which nothing can block.” Blackcurrent’s heart was filled with panic and disbelief that he had lost, but when he thought back to that sword, he felt completely powerless.

“Ji Ning wins!” The white-haired elder shouted loudly, and the entire grand sealing formation vanished.

“Senior apprentice-brother Blackcurrent, thank you for taking it easy on me.” Ning’s voice rang out, echoing throughout the entire Dao Debate Palace. Only now did Blackcurrent come to his senses. He forcibly

clamped down on the wild thoughts running through his mind, then clasped his hands and said, "Junior apprentice-brother, you truly are formidable. I sigh that I am inferior to you." After speaking, he released the bond with the golem, then transformed into a streak of light and left the arena. He handed the two jade bottles to the white-haired elder, and then, silently and wordlessly, entered the crowd of spectating fellow disciples.

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"What a powerful sword," the fat, sloppy-looking youth mused to himself.

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"In a few decades, our Black-White College will have produced yet another formidable figure." Holyfire had a hint of a smile on his face as he looked at Ning.

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In the entire Dao Debate Palace, only the two Immortals truly understood that sword technique of Ning's! "Lustrous Sword-Heart! What a fine Lustrous Sword-Heart!" The short elder's eyes were shining as he stared at Ning. "Such a powerful sword-heart, such a resolute sword-heart...our Black-White College has truly taken in a treasure this time."

"We have indeed." Immortal Diancai was staring towards the distant Ning as well, and his eyes were blazing. "I wonder, how in the world did this disciple of mine manage to generate a sword-heart such as this in ten or so short years. The experiences he had did involve life and death, but for them to produce such a powerful sword-heart...this is truly inconceivable."

"Hahaha, just you watch and see. Those other fellows are probably going to arrive soon," the short elder chortled. Immortal Diancai laughed as well. The short elder let out a weird laugh and said, "They are definitely feeling regret as well. Regret for not having come to the Dao Debate Palace to watch in person.."

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The headmaster of the Black-White College, Daoist Jadesea, was currently seated in the lotus position on his bed. Above him, there was a watery scrying mirror which clearly displayed the discourses on the Dao that were going on within the Dao Debate Palace.

“That sword!” A look of shock appeared on the face of Daoist Jadesea, who was so handsome that women would be infatuated with him. “Can it be that he has embarked on the path of the Sword Immortal?”

“Ugh!” Daoist Jadesea let out a regretful sigh. He could only see the images through water-scrying, but the auras, the presences, the ripples of the world...all of the intricate details were lost.

“I’m going.” Daoist Jadesea didn’t hesitate at all. Waving his hand, he made the water-scrying mirror disappear, and then his body flickered and disappeared.

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Quite a few of the Primal Daoists of the Black-White College were watching this battle through the water-scrying technique. When they saw that sword emerge, all of them were awestruck. However, because none of them had personally seen and sensed the sword in the Dao Debate Palace, they weren’t completely certain of what it was either. Thus, all of them hurried towards the Dao Debate Palace...and even two of the Immortals headed there as well.

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The third generation disciples who were in the Dao Debate Palace, in turn, had no idea about what was going on in the outside world. They were all chatting amongst themselves. Even Blackcurrent had lost? Then who would be the next to stand forward? Blackcurrent could be considered one of the top ten figures amongst those who had multiple Dao Domains.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, don’t be so sentimental. It’s just a set of flying swords.” Senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow was currently chatting with Ning, and offering to him that set of [Heavenly Spirits,

Earthly Fiends] sword formation. Ning laughed. "Fine. Then your junior apprentice-brother will accept it."

The simple interactions Ning had had with Bloodshadow made him feel quite well-disposed towards him. He accepted the set of flying swords, and by doing so, he was clearly acknowledging Bloodshadow as a friend.

"That's more like it." Bloodshadow nodded. "Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, your talent is astonishing. However, the path of Immortals is not one in which you can simply bury yourself in training. You also need to wander the world and experience many things for yourself. I imagine that in a few years at most, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you will go out and adventure through the world. Most likely, you will also join the Raindragon Guard and whatnot. If there's anything you need, feel free to come find me. I'm quite familiar regarding the Raindragon Guard."

"When the time comes, I will definitely go and trouble you, senior apprentice-brother," Ning said with a laugh.

"Eh?" Bloodshadow suddenly turned his head to look, and Ning did so as well. A figure had emerged from the third generation disciples.

"Her?" Ning's pupils contracted. The person who had walked out was a black-robed maiden. Previously, she had sat there, surrounded by others; even Ninelotus had been by her side. Clearly, her status was extremely high.

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." The black-robed maiden walked over, then said in a cool, calm voice, "I should be the most powerful of the disciples who have comprehended multiple Dao Domains. If you defeat me, then it will naturally be up to senior apprentice-brother Holyfire and the others will come out to fight you." After finishing, she turned and moved towards the side room to select a golem.

"You are doomed." Bloodshadow sucked a cold breath. "Who is she?" Although Ning had a guess, he still asked the question.

"The Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei!" Bloodshadow spoke in a very soft voice. "She is a reincarnated Immortal, and her talent is terrifyingly great. When she had first entered the school, none of the old disciples chose to

have a Dao Debate with her! Her training speed is astonishing as well; she is currently just over twenty years old, but her power has already reached a frightening level.”

Ning was inwardly shocked. A reincarnated Immortal? His master had also told him that there were only a total of three reincarnated Immortals amongst the third generation disciples. Two had trained for over eighty years, while one had been training for over twenty years. The one who had been training for over twenty years was most likely this black-robed woman, Yu Wei.

“No wonder she said that she is the most powerful out of those who have comprehended multiple Dao Domains,” Ning mused to himself in shock.

“Junior apprentice-brother, I’d like to help you, but I’m unable to.” Bloodshadow immediately departed.

“So what if she is a reincarnated Immortal? She’s just trained for ten or so more years than I have, that’s all.” Although Ning was on high alert, he didn’t feel the slightest bit of dread.

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Just a few moments later. Ning was atop the stone pillar in the arena, under the grand sealing barrier, and he was staring in astonishment at the scene before him.

He had released a thousand flying swords, which had combined to form the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], and the power of this attack was truly astonishing. But this Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei, had actually also chosen the Thousandwords Golem, and had also released a thousand flying swords, all of which had transformed into a sea of fiery sword light.

A scorching sea of fiery sword-light. A sharp, fierce sea of fiery sword-light. An irresistible sea of fiery sword light!

A head-on clash! A frontal clash!

Although Ning’s sword-light was extremely sharp and extremely strong, that all-devouring flame was even more berserk. It smashed apart Ning’s

sword-light, piercing past the protective armor of Ning's Thousandwords Golem.

"Yu Wei wins!" The white-haired elder called out. It was a clean, straightforward win.

"I lost!" Ning rose to his feet and laughed. "Senior apprentice-sister, you are formidable. I whole-heartedly acknowledge my loss."

"When I was sixteen, I wasn't as strong as you are." The Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei, gave Ning a glance. "Right. Don't forget to give me those hundred black-white pellets and those five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence."

Ning stared at her, instantly stupefied. He opened his mouth, but no words came out. Why would an exalted reincarnated Immortal act as though she cared about the wager that much? What, did she think that he was going to welch on their bet?

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By now, the various Primal Daoists had all arrived at the Dao Debate Palace. They made it just in the nick of time, and were just barely able to catch the sight of Ning battling against the Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei. All of them nodded inwardly. "He really is a Sword Immortal. And what a powerful sword-heart! In a few centuries, our Black-White College will most likely produce yet another Sword Immortal that is comparable to Uncle-Master Diancai!"

In a corner of the Dao Debate Palace. Whoosh! Whoosh! Two more Immortals had appeared next to Immortal Fivecraze and Immortal Diancai. One was a bearded old man with a crown on his head, while the other was a juvenile child who radiated an aura of infinite cold. Their arrival had not been noticed by any of the Primal Daoists or the third generation disciples within the Dao Debate Palace.

"Sword Immortal!" The crowned, bearded elder nodded as he spoke. "He has indeed embarked onto the path of a Sword Immortal. Finally, our Black-White College has yet another disciple who has begun to comprehend the Grand Dao of the Sword."

Daos were divided into levels as well. Rainwater, ice, and whatnot; these were all just some of the countless Daos of the natural world. But the Dao of the Sword, however, was on a higher level; it was a 'Grand Dao'.

Even gaining a basic understanding of it was extremely difficult; Zifu Disciples would generally find it quite easy to comprehend a hint of the True Meaning of the Rainwater, and in fact, it wasn't even that impressive for them to comprehend a Rainwater Dao Domain.

But the Dao of the Sword, as one of the Grand Daos...even getting a basic understanding of it was extremely rare.

"And what a powerful sword-heart. A sword-heart like that, talent like that, and comprehension abilities like that..." The juvenile child's voice was quite youthful, but his words rang out in a manner that seemed aged and sallow. "He is indeed a piece of unpolished jade that can be sculpted into a mighty Sword Immortal."

"Right, right, right." The short elder nodded repeatedly. "Our Black-White College currently only has a single Sword Immortal, junior apprentice-brother Diancai. Now, we have another one. A Sword Immortal! Even if he is defeated by the tribulations and ends up becoming a Loose Immortal, he will still be one with astonishing combat power, haha."

The crowned, bearded elder instantly frowned and barked, "Senior apprentice-brother Fivecraze, junior apprentice-brother Diancai is merely an Earth Immortal right now. He has a very good chance of becoming a Celestial Immortal. Don't say such negative things at a time like this!"

The short elder immediately looked towards Immortal Diancai. "Junior apprentice-brother Diancai..."

But Immortal Diancai just laughed calmly. "It's fine. It's enough so long as I act in a way which is true to my heart. It is precisely as senior Northwalker said; it is better to live passionately for a day, than to live a century while stifled. All I need to do is continue moving forward. Whether or not I can become a Celestial Immortal...that's secondary."

"Well-spoken!" The short elder nodded. As for the juvenile youth, he

looked at Immortal Diancai. “Junior apprentice-brother Diancai, Ji Ning is a second Sword Immortal for our Black-White College. You must train him well!”

Immortal Diancai turned his head, staring at the distant Ji Ning, who was handing over jade bottles to Yu Wei. An eager light appeared in his eyes, and he slowly said, “That is to be expected. He is my disciple, after all!”

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“Senior apprentice-sister. A hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquefied elemental essences. Here it is.” Ning handed the two jade bottles to the Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei.

The black-robed Yu Wei glanced at Ning, a hint of amusement on her face. Stretching her arm out, she snatched the bottles away from Ning, then turned and left.

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